

I'm Still Thankful

Sunday, November 28, 2021

I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving and that you took time to actually be THANKFUL. AS I am sure you are aware, the days surrounding the major holidays are often so filled with activities and things we must get done that we can find ourselves on the other side of them having missed out on the real point of why we celebrate them.

Combine that with a culture that has completely secularized, cancelled, or hijacked these Holidays for their own selfish purposes, and we can be left with an empty shell of a meaningless and unfulfilling day on the calendar

In fact, I received an email from a non-profit humanitarian organization last week that wished me a Happy Thanksgiving and then went on to tell me how we shouldn't emphasize Thanksgiving as a time of celebration because it has the opposite meaning for the indigenous people in America because of how we have treated them. So rather than be Thankful, I should be ashamed of our history as a Nation

Every culture has its evil for which it should be ashamed and repent. Mankind as a whole, from the beginning has perpetuated unspeakable evils of every sort and sinned against God our creator but that doesn't change the good things that have also taken place, nor does it change the history of what happened on what many refer to as that first thanksgiving 400 years ago

In 1621, the Plymouth colonists and the Wampanoag shared an autumn harvest feast that is acknowledged today as one of the first Thanksgiving celebrations in the colonies. For more than two centuries, days of thanksgiving were celebrated by individual colonies and states. It wasn't until 1863, in the midst of the [Civil War](#), that President Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving Day to be held each November.

In September 1620, a small ship called the [Mayflower](#) left Plymouth, England, carrying 102 passengers—an assortment of religious separatists seeking a new home where they could freely practice their faith and other individuals lured by the promise of prosperity and land ownership in the "New World." After a [treacherous and uncomfortable crossing](#) that lasted 66 days, they dropped anchor near the tip of Cape Cod, far north of their intended destination at the mouth of the Hudson River.

One month later, the Mayflower crossed [Massachusetts](#) Bay, where the [Pilgrims](#), as they are now commonly known, began the work of establishing a village at Plymouth.

Throughout that first brutal winter, most of the colonists remained on board the ship, where they suffered from exposure, scurvy and outbreaks of contagious disease. Only half of the Mayflower's original passengers and crew lived to see their first New England spring. In March, the remaining settlers moved ashore, where they received an astonishing visit from a member of the Abenaki tribe who greeted them in English.

Several days later, he returned with another Native American, Squanto, a member of the Pawtuxet tribe who had been kidnapped by an English sea captain and sold into slavery before escaping to London and returning to his homeland on an exploratory expedition. Squanto taught the Pilgrims, weakened by malnutrition and illness, how to cultivate corn, extract sap from maple trees, catch fish in the rivers and avoid poisonous plants. He also helped the settlers forge an alliance with the Wampanoag, a local tribe, which would endure for more than 50 years and tragically remains one of the sole examples of harmony between European colonists and Native Americans.

In November 1621, after the Pilgrims' first corn harvest proved successful, Governor [William Bradford](#) organized a celebratory feast and invited a group of the fledgling colony's Native American allies, including the Wampanoag chief Massasoit. Now remembered as America's "first Thanksgiving"—although the Pilgrims themselves may not have used the term at the time—the festival lasted for three days. While no record exists of the [first Thanksgiving's exact menu](#), much of what we know about what happened at the first Thanksgiving comes from Pilgrim chronicler Edward Winslow, who wrote:

"Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruits of our labors; they four in one day killed as much fowl, as with a little help beside, served the Company almost a week, at which time amongst other Recreations, we exercised our Arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and amongst the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five Deer, which they brought to the Plantation and bestowed on our Governor, and upon the Captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."

The point of Thanksgiving celebrations was to remind us to be thankful. Something I fear we often forget. The day itself comes and goes so quickly and has become surrounded with so much materialism and greed that we miss the whole point - being thankful.

All of us are all too familiar with the greed of materialism that has for decades now surrounded the day after thanksgiving. In fact, we dubbed that day Black Friday. As if to say enough thankfulness now it's time to tell ourselves how much we don't have but we can get on sale if we are smart enough and quick enough to take advantage of the after-Thanksgiving sales

With Grinch-like cunning we deviously found ways to stretch the celebration of this melee of greed by first starting it earlier each year, then encroaching on the day itself, then extending both long after and days before Thanksgiving Day so that it seems the entire month can now be labeled Black Friday

Add to that the fact that stores, and people too, already have their Christmas stuff up long before the day of thanksgiving even arrives, causing it to get even more lost amidst the chaos of this time of year.

It seems as if the best we can hope for is that we take a few minutes before we indulge ourselves of our Thanksgiving Meal to say some words of thanks. It seems to me that with our lack of understanding of what true Thanksgiving is all about and the cultural roadblocks we face in actually giving thanks; we fall noticeably short of the Biblical admonition to be thankful.

Ephesians 5:20 (ESV)

20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Psalm 100 (ESV)

100 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!

2 Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

3 Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!

5 For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

When we are indeed thankful in this manner it seems that it is all too short lived.

Last week the Holy Spirit dropped a phrase in my heart, a message about thanksgiving that I would like to try to unpack for you today... I'm Still Thankful. On this Sunday following Thanksgiving are you still Thankful and will you continue to Give Thanks in the days ahead?

I - personal responsibility in being thankful

More than ten times the Psalmist declares... "I will give thanks" It's not enough that someone in your family gives thanks, it's not enough that a few in the church give thanks. Each of us has the responsibility to give thanks.

In what ways have YOU been thankful in the last few days?

AM - this word reminds me of the need for the Thankfulness in the Present Tense. Too often our Thankfulness is in the past... I was thankful when... or tied to future blessing... I will be thankful when... But we need to be thankful now... Each and every moment of every day we have reason to give thanks.

Colossians 3:15

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

These first two words also remind me of the present ness of Christ - THE I AM - who is always with us. Knowing He is with us I declare with David.

Psalm 7:17

17 I will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness; I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord Most High.

Are you thankful right now?

STILL - Ongoing Thankfulness, in spite of my circumstances

Ongoing - not just once a year or even once a week, but continually thankful

Ephesians 5:20 (ESV)

20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Giving thanks, not only when things are good but even when things are not good.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NIRV)

18 Give thanks no matter what happens. God wants you to thank him because you believe in Christ Jesus.

When are you most thankful? When things are good or when things are more difficult?

THANKful

It's not enough to know we should be thankful, we need to DO IT

James 1:22 (NLT)

22 But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.

Why is it so much easier to not be thankful? To complain... To Criticize... To be negative... To focus on what we don't have rather than be thankful for what we do have.

Many of you have heard me tell the story about when Lindsey was a little girl, and we were pastoring in Western Kansas. We lived in a small town and the nearest retail store was a small Alco in Scott City about 30 miles away. One day we were shopping, and Lindsey (about 3 years old) was with us and had been asking for things throughout the store. We accommodated her by purchasing something but when we went outside, she wanted to ride the coin operated horse. When we told her "No" she began to throw a fit because she didn't get what she wanted. I expressly remember getting upset with her and saying loudly, "Why can't you just be happy with what you already have" Almost immediately I heard the Holy Spirit speak to me words that I have never forgotten... "Yea, I know what you mean."

That has been a constant reminder to me to always be thankful for what I have not complain about what I don't have.

How can you refocus on being more THANKful for what you have already been blessed with, rather than throw a fit (Complain) about what you don't have?

ThankFULL - Overflowing thankfulness

I don't want to just be thankful... I want to be thankFULL... I want to be full of thanksgiving. In fact, I want my life to be overflowing with thanksgiving.

Colossians 4:2 (NIRV)

2 Give a lot of time and effort to prayer. Always be watchful and thankful.

If your thanksgiving were to fill a glass, how big and/or full would it be?