

1863 Thanksgiving Proclamation

It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God; to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations are blessed whose God is the Lord.

We know that by his divine law, nations, like individuals, are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world. May we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war which now desolates the land may be a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people?

We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown.

But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that God should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged, as with one heart and one voice, by the whole American people. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November as a day of Thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens.

Abraham Lincoln

Joyful Life Bible Studies

THANKSGIVING

1995

*It is a time of deep thanksgiving to the Lord
for blessing you with a good harvest and in
so many other ways; it shall be a time of great joy.*

Deuteronomy 16:15b TLB

FIRST DAY: Reflect on Deuteronomy 16:15b above.

1. The root of our English word *thank* has been traced back to the Old High German word *denken* which means *think*. *Think* about your Thanksgiving Day, 1995, with Deuteronomy 16:15b in mind. Use the underlined words in the opening verse of this lesson to speak to you about your observance of Thanksgiving Day. What do they say to you?
2. The abundance of food that is available to us daily has a way of dulling our senses to the meaning of the word *harvest*. Think for a moment about *harvest*. Capture the awesome work of God behind the *harvest*. Behold the farmer (husbandman) of James 5:7b in relationship to Psalm 65:9,10(11-13) and Psalm 104:13,14. Put yourself in the place of the farmer when he experiences an abundant harvest. In what way does this stir your heart to give *thanksgiving to the Lord* for this year's harvest?
 - a. When you walk through the produce section of the market, let your heart offer up thanksgiving to the Lord for His wonderful provision. What particular product of this year's harvest are you especially thankful for? Why?
3. Begin this lesson by thanking God now for the abundant harvest He provides for us that we are prone to take for granted. Write your thanksgiving here.

*Come ye thankful people come
Raise the song of harvest home.
God our Maker doth provide
For our wants to be supplied.*

H.A.

SECOND DAY: Read Psalm 105:1,2

1. We are living in an age where ungodly people are reinventing the history of our country. They want to obliterate any mention of its having been founded in righteousness and established on Godly principles. This is a wake-up call for Christians. We have already experienced the removal of Christian celebration of Christmas and Easter in our public schools. What do they teach about the observance of Thanksgiving Day? Research this and write your answer here.

a. What do you know about the origin of Thanksgiving Day? Answer from the following questions:

(1.) Who were the pilgrims?

(2.) Why did they come to America?

(3.) What do they have to do with our present Thanksgiving Day holiday (holy day)?

Optional: Who was William Bradford and what does he have to do historically with Thanksgiving Day?

b. Thanksgiving Day in the United States has been traced back to the Pilgrim's being influenced by what Old Testament Feast? See Exodus 23:(14)16b. See also Deuteronomy 16:15b TLB (page 1)

MOMS: Read Exodus 12:26,27a. When your children ask you why we keep *this Thanksgiving feast*, how will you answer them?

2. In today's reading, Psalm 105:1b,2b what are we told to do?

a. The reason we can *make known His deeds* among the pilgrims, for which they gave thanks to God, is because William Bradford, the Governor of the Plymouth Colony, recorded this in a manuscript which is still quoted today. He has been called *The Father of American History* because of his writing. Keeping alive the truth about our country's founding is important to the present generation and generations to come. How will our cooperation with Psalm 105:1b,2b help us to pass this truth on?

3. To prepare yourself to answer anyone who asks you why we keep this holiday, summarize in one sentence each paragraph of the Thanksgiving Proclamation included with this lesson:

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f. The date designated for which this day has been *set apart* is recorded in the last paragraph of the Proclamation. Underline it.

- (1.) Print from the last line of the Proclamation why this day is to be observed.
4. If we don't take time beforehand to prepare for Thanksgiving, food and football or other activities can siphon off the primary purpose for this national holiday. Preparation for the Old Testament Feasts took thought, time, and toil. With the many resources we have today, our great necessity is thought. Think of ways to commemorate Thanksgiving Day that will draw attention to the purpose for which it was inaugurated. Share these with your group.

*Aye, call it holy ground
The soil where first they trod;
They have left unstained what there they found,
Freedom to worship God.*

-F.D. Hermans

THIRD DAY: Read Psalm 68:19

1. Thanksgiving should not be restricted to one day a year. It is an integral part of the Christian's life. Observe this from the following paraphrase of Colossians 2:6,7. Underline the last sentence.

And now as you trusted Christ to save you, trust Him, too, for each day's problems; live in vital union with Him. Let your roots grow down into Him and draw up nourishment from Him. See that you go on growing in the Lord, and become strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with joy and thanksgiving for all He has done. Selah - pause and think about this.

- a. *Let your life overflow with joy and thanksgiving* by recalling what the Lord has done for you from the following verses. Do as many as you have time for.
1. Psalm 103:3-6
 2. Psalm 107:1
 3. Isaiah 40:29
 4. Isaiah 41:10
 5. Ephesians 1:3-11
 6. Hebrews 13:5,6
 7. I Peter 5:7
- b. Write a note of thanksgiving to the Lord for one of these blessings for which you are particularly grateful.
- c. What does the phrase *abounding therein with thanksgiving* (Colossians 2:7c KJV) say to you?

- (1.) What helps you to do this?

2. What does I Thessalonians 5:18 teach about giving thanks?
 - a. Take the most difficult problem in your life today. What do you find in this to give thanks for?
 - (1.) Why are you able to *count it all joy*? James 1:2-4
 - b. How does trusting in the Lord with all your heart enable you to be thankful in *everything*?
 - (1.) Write the strengthening truth contained in I Corinthians 15:57 and II Corinthians 2:14a.
 - c. How does being thankful change your focus, perspective, and attitude?
3. What things hinder us from being thankful in *everything*, even the good things?
 - a. Record the word from Psalm 103:2 that is a major cause of lack of thanksgiving.
 - (1.) What would you recommend to someone to trigger her memory in this area of thanksgiving?
4. How does Ephesians 5:20 expand your range of thanksgiving?
 - a. Comment on the word *always* in this verse.

*Every morning tell Him,
"Thank You for Your kindness,"
and every evening rejoice in all His faithfulness.*

Psalm 92:2 TLB

FOURTH DAY: Read Hebrews 13:15

1. Often in the Bible *thanksgiving* and *praise* are linked together in worship. See I Chronicles 23:30. (*Thanksgiving* is usually defined as gratitude for what the Lord does for us; *praise*, for Who and What He is.) Observe this in Hebrews 13:15. Define *praise* from this verse (Hebrews 13:15b).
 - a. Have you ever thought of *praise* or *thanksgiving* as a *sacrifice*? Summarize what the following verses say about this:
 - (1.) Psalm 50:14a (*offer* here refers to sacrifice)
 - (2.) Psalm 107:22

(3.) Psalm 116:17

- b. What does the word *sacrifice* suggest to you about thanksgiving?

Optional: How does the *sacrifice of thanksgiving* in Hebrews 13:15 differ from that in Leviticus 7:12,13a?

Advanced Students: Read I Peter 2:5. Explain the meaning of *spiritual sacrifices* in the light of the preceding verses. Think also of the word *priesthood* (I Peter 2:5a) in relationship to this.

2. According to Hebrews 13:15 how often are we to offer the *sacrifice of praise*?

- a. Is it not glorious to know that we can offer this sacrifice any time and any place?! We are not confined to going to an altar in Jerusalem. Express what this means to you.

(1.) In response to Hebrews 13:15 offer a sacrifice of praise to God now - *that is, the fruit of your lips giving thanks to His Name.*

3. What do these verses reveal about giving thanks to the Lord? Don't rush though these. *Think before you thank:*

- a. Psalm 30:4
- b. Psalm 75:1
- c. Psalm 79:13
- d. Psalm 92:1
- e. Psalm 100:4
- f. Psalm 136:1,2
- g. Choose one of these verses and write your thanksgiving in accordance with what it says.

*We give You praises with thanksgiving
As we lift our hands to praise You and glorify Your Name
For You are God
All the wonders that You do show Your glory and Your truth.
There is no one else like You.*

Unknown

FIFTH DAY: Read Psalm 9:1,2

1. *Thanksgiving* in the Bible is also yoked with *singing* as well as *praise*. Verify this from the following verses:

- a. Psalm 69:30
- b. Psalm 95:1,2

2. Consider the phrase *thankful heart* as you contemplate the following paraphrase of Colossians 3:16,17 TLB. Underline the phrases that refer to singing and thanks.

Remember what Christ taught and let His words enrich your lives and make you wise; teach them to each other and sing them out in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing to the Lord with thankful hearts. And whatsoever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus and come with Him into the presence of God the Father to give Him your thanks.

- a. With a *thankful heart* choose a song of thanksgiving to sing to Him now. Write a line of the song here.
3. What do you learn about giving thanks from the following Prayer Book version of Psalm 9:1,2: *I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart: I will speak of all Thy marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in Thee: yea, my songs will I make of Thy Name, O Thou most High.*
4. Why did David write a Psalm for the musicians to sing and play on instruments when the Ark of God was brought to Jerusalem? I Chronicles 16:7
- a. Select a few phrases from this I Chronicles 16:23-36 to add to your thanksgiving and praise vocabulary.
5. What happened when the singers and praisers began to sing and praise the Lord in II Chronicles 20:(20,21)22?
- a. What lesson is there in this for you?
6. II Chronicles 5:(12)13 describes the incredible joy and rejoicing that took place when the Ark of God was placed in the Holy of Holies in the completed Temple during Solomon's reign. What were the musicians doing?
- a. Write the words of their song.
- b. Enter into the Temple with these singers and praisers through II Chronicles 5:13b-14. Behold the band and choir members. When they began to sing and praise and thank the Lord, what happened?
- c. Think about the glory of the Lord filling the Temple as they sang and praised and thanked God. Now read I Corinthians 6:19,20. Thanksgiving and praise to the Lord fill *our* temples with the glory of the Lord. Let the glory of the Lord fill your temple now as you sing praises to Him.

*Let our voices rise like incense.
Let them be as sweet perfume.
Let our praises fill the temple.
Hallelujahs ringing ever new.*

-selected

SIXTH DAY: Review

1. Why is it critical for Christians to know and make known the historical truth about the commemoration of Thanksgiving Day in our nation?
2. What insight on or observation of the fall harvest enriches your thanksgiving this year?
3. Think for a moment about the alternative of being thankful. Observe and record the consequences of this from Romans 1:21,22 .
 - a. *The beginning of man's rebellion against God was and is the lack of a thankful heart. This is a prevalent malady in our nation. Apparently our country has always suffered this affliction to some degree. Glimpse this in the fourth paragraph of the Thanksgiving Proclamation. Summarize the problem.*
 - (1.) What can you contribute to the remedy?
 - b. Describe the toxic effect the lack of thanksgiving has on us:
 - (1.) spiritually
 - (2.) physically
 - (3.) emotionally
 - (4.) relationally
4. *Each breath of air should inspire us with thanks and the blood in our veins should circulate gratitude throughout our system.* Spurgeon How have you been inspired this week through your focus on thanksgiving to express a deeper measure of gratitude and appreciation to the Lord?
5. In light of this lesson what will you do to celebrate Thanksgiving Day?

Optional: Share a creative way you use to emphasize the true purpose and meaning of Thanksgiving Day.

*Love and thanksgiving fill every heart,
This day of gladness we've set apart;
After the harvest, glad voices raise.
This day was made for singing and praise.*