

## Let Us Be Forever Thankful

In 1621, a group of religious dissenters, the Puritans, fled religious persecution in Europe to found a colony in the New World. One hundred and two made the 66 day journey and eventually settled at Plymouth among the Wampanoag Indians. The first year was difficult, and almost half of the original settlers died. However, with the help of the Wampanoag, 1622 brought a bountiful harvest. They celebrated the harvest with a holiday we now know as Thanksgiving. They were thankful to God for their survival and credited God for giving them all they needed to sustain them.

We, after several presidential decrees and proclamations, celebrate what we call Thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday in November. To many, it is just a day to be thankful for their excessive eating, family time, and football. In reality, God is not at the center of their celebration. We who believe that God is the source of all of our blessings, celebrate Thanksgiving with Him and what He has done for us as the reason for celebration.

We are to be thankful to God for:

All the material things we are given. In His teachings, over and over again, Jesus promises that those who love Him will be provided with all we need in order to sustain ourselves. In Matthew 6, Jesus tells us “do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear.” He goes on to say that we are much more valuable than the birds of the air and the flowers of the field. God will sustain us and provide us with our needs. He finishes by saying that we should “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Family and friends. Godly friends and instruction from family is important. I am thankful for my religious upbringing. I am thankful for my opportunity to guide my children and grandchildren to love God and recognize Him as the source of all things. Christian friends set good examples of just how Christians should live. We should all strive to be a good Christian friend and example to others.

Grace and redemption. God did not have to save us from the sin to which we had given ourselves over. But he WANTED to, because of His great love for us. He sacrificed His Son so that we could spend eternity with him. Peter says it best in 2 Peter 3:9 when he says that God “is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” Paul says: “Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our lord.” (Romans 7:25)

Prayer. We have a Father that wants us to talk to Him about our concerns and expects us to thank him for all that He does for us. Paul tells us in Philippians 4:6-7: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Prayer is praise, recognizing God's superiority. Petition is simply asking God for what we want. And, of course, thanksgiving is constantly thanking God for what has been done for us.

Of course, I know, and you know, that we are to be thankful to God every day—not just on the fourth Thursday in November. Perhaps we can take this time when the nation celebrates this holiday to renew our efforts. Thanks be to God for all that sustains us, for our family and friends, for grace and redemption, and for the privilege of prayer, today and every day.