

Thanksgiving - Thanks Living

"in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you". **1 Thess. 5:18**

"...giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light." Col 1:12

There is no question in my thinking that our pilgrim forefathers had Deut. 26 in mind when they established the first Thanksgiving in our country centuries ago. The law of the offering of the first fruits was God's instruction to Israel to acknowledge His abundant provision once they entered Canaan, the Land of Promise. It was also designed to highlight His grace and mercy in delivering them from their bondage in Egypt and leading them to that place that flowed with milk and honey. It was the chronicle of God's mighty power toward them as a nation and His continual goodness and grace upon them afterwards. Similarly, despite the initial hardship the pilgrims experienced in coming to the New World and their arduous first year here, they also declared that same goodness of God on their behalf in more ways than one – just as Israel did in the past and as we should do today.

The details of this law were simple. Upon entering the land, the grateful offerer was to take the first fruits of their produce and place them in a basket, setting it before the priest as an act of worship, v. 2. What followed was a firm declaration that God had indeed kept His word and brought the nation into their inheritance, v. 3. The priest would then take the basket from his hand and offer it to the LORD, v. 4. The testimony upon his lips was that previously as a nation they were ready to perish (v. 5), describing the way they were mistreated in the world and afflicted and how in the midst of this horrible misery, the cry went up to the Lord who heard their plea. With a mighty hand and outstretched arm, He greatly delivered them from their bondage in Egypt, as recorded in Exodus 2.

As believers, we too, once were on the brink of perishing, having been delivered from "so great a death" (2 Cor. 1:10). But God in mercy, raised us up and made us to sit together in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). We too, have obtained an inheritance (Eph. 1:11) as they did. Like Mephibosheth, we have been made to sit at the king's table, despite our weakness and past infirmities (2 Sam. 9). Indeed, God has kept His Word and as a certain songwriter has penned it: *"My Redeemer is faithful and true, everything that He said, He will do; every morning His mercies are new; my Redeemer is faithful and true"*. Like that one leper who came back to the Lord, falling on his face and giving Him thanks, Luke 17:16, we too need to come back to the Lord regularly and give Him thanks for what He has done when we were helpless and hopeless. We declare with the same conviction as David in Psalm 40:1-3: *"He heard my cry and brought me out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set my feet upon a Rock and established my goings. He put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God"*. It is our privilege to express with grateful hearts, the work of redemption in our hearts each Lord's Day as we thus remember Him. We are to bring our "baskets" full – whatever size they be – to our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, who offers it up and adds "His sweet perfume" before our Father in Heaven. As this is done, we are to give thanks to the Father who has *"made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light because He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son"* (Col. 1:12-13". Praise His name.

But it does not stop there. As with Israel long ago, our thankfulness for our spiritual and temporal provision should not be confined to ourselves, but shared with others in practical ways. Rejoicing in every good thing that the Lord, the grateful offerer was to share what he possessed with others, the *"stranger, the fatherless, the widow... they they may eat within your gates and be filled"* (v. 12). The essence of true thankfulness is sharing with others what we have received and enjoy. The four lepers in 2

Kings 7 were smitten in their hearts when they realized that what they possessed, they were actually and keeping to themselves. They acknowledged their wrong and determined among themselves that they needed to go and tell the king's household and share with others what they had. We should do this with the Gospel, telling others of the Gospel of God's free grace in Christ, whenever we have the opportunity to share the hope that lies within us, (1 Peter 3:15). We should also share of our material possessions as a tangible means to back up our words and give them weight.

At this time of year, let's look for opportunities to share with others, both in word and deed how the Lord has blessed us and provided for our all our needs in Christ.

"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased"

Heb. 13:15–16