

1 Chronicles 16:8-9 Live thankfully! Thanksgiving November 21, 22, 2018

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Grace and peace to you from God who supplies all our needs and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The basis for our Thanksgiving message is from 1 Chronicles 16:8-9

This is Your Word, heavenly Father. Please use it to keep us thankful always. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Christian Friends,

Thanksgiving has been a long tradition in our nation. The first celebration was in 1621 by the Pilgrims at Plymouth Colony. The Pilgrims had fled from England because of religious persecution. They came to America to worship in freedom. But, the trip was delayed and it took over two months to cross the sea. They arrived shortly before winter and needed quickly to find shelter and a food supply. By the end of the first winter in the "New World," ½ of the 103 original colonists had died from illness or malnourishment (5 cornels of corn).

But, with the new spring and summer came a renewed life. They freely gathered food and made better places to live. By the fall, due to the help of the Wampanoag Indians, the Pilgrims had a bountiful supply of food the winter. The Pilgrims and Wampanoags set aside three days to celebrate. The Pilgrims especially thanked God for the blessings He had provided. They continued to show their thanks each fall season.

Thanksgiving didn't become a national holiday until the time of the Civil War. In 1863 President Lincoln gave this proclamation: "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have grown in number, wealth, and power as no other nation has 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 ... our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. We have become ... too proud to pray to the God that made us" (Abraham Lincoln). May his words never apply to us! We are gathered here to remember our God and thank Him for His great goodness!

Live thankfully!

First, we "give thanks to the LORD" (v.8). Let's not think that we're well-off because we're lucky. It isn't just from our family or hard work that made us who we are. It is not because of a false religion that teaches about good Karma. We need to daily recall that our Triune God has blessed us! Think of where we would be without Him? Luther's explanation to the 1st Article reminds us: God has made us and all people. He provided good things for our bodies and souls. He gives us reasoning abilities and 5 senses to fully experience the world that He made for us. He also gave us food, clothing, house and family. God has sent His angels to protect us. He cares for us as a loving Father out of mercy; not because we deserve it. Don't forget what He has done!

Added to that, we are thankful for God's Son who saved us from all our sins! The material blessings listed in Luther's explanation to the 1st Article someday will disappear, but Jesus' saving work remains forever. *"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!"* (Ro. 5:8-9). Think where we would be today without a Savior! Think where we would be for eternity without Jesus!

His saving work alone would be enough reason to live every moment of life in thanksgiving! Paul wrote to the suffering Christians in Philippi: *"Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say: rejoice!"* (Philippians 4:4). When we grasp what God has done by His grace, we have a whole-hearted joy, like the Pilgrims who couldn't contain their gratitude for their loving God. Paul understood this. He wrote: *"It is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved"* (Romans 10:10).

This leads to the 2nd point from our verses: **“call on His name” (v.8)**. The reason that David wrote this Psalm was that the Ark of the Covenant was being moved into Jerusalem. The Ark represented the loving and protective presence of God. Once the Ark was inside the tent that David had made for it, there was a great celebration and a huge throng of Israelites gathered to worship. The trumpets sounded and instruments played as singers chanted Psalms of praise to the Lord. Offerings were sacrificed to the Lord. And God blessed His people, who had responded with such acts of faith in Him!

On this Thanksgiving, we don’t need an Ark of the Old Covenant to assure us that our loving God is here. Jesus promised, *“Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20)*. With Jesus before us, we want to honor Him. The best way we can honor Jesus is by hearing and keeping His Word. It was His Word at the beginning of the world that said, *“Let there be!”* and everything was created. With His same Word, the Holy Spirit is working in us so that we trust and confess Jesus as our Savior.

We also call on His name by singing. David wrote, *“Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts” (v.9)*. Not everyone was a singer at David’s time. But those who were used their voices to praise the LORD. The same would be true of the Pilgrims. They had no special instruments, but they sang with hearts filled with joy. And as they sang Christian hymns and spiritual songs, they became stronger in their conviction that their God was with them and He would help them through future challenges, too. Paul also wrote, *“Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20)*. Many times we have sung the hymn: *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*. We read in verse 4: *“Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee; who from the heavens the streams of His mercy doth send thee. Ponder anew what the Almighty can do, who with His love doth befriend thee!”*

Our worship today is a continuation of what believers have done for 1,000’s of years. We should consider it a privilege to be able to worship our God! Part of our worship includes prayer. God tells us to pray for family, country, and especially about things that burden us. *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and ... minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7)*. The peace of God is when we put our concerns into God’s hands just as the Pilgrims did. God promised, *“Call on me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you and you will honor me.” (Psalm 50:15)* As we pray and see God’s answers, we can’t help but live thankfully.

Third, our thankfulness helps other people to know God. Our verse states, *“Make known among the nations what He has done” (v.8)*. While our lives of thankfulness are focused on God, people will notice us. The nations around David’s kingdom knew of the true God. The Native Americans living near the Pilgrims were influenced by them to know the true God. God deserves everyone’s praise. But, if people don’t know the true God, they can’t honor Him. The Bible encourages us, *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15)*. Jesus once healed a demon-possessed man by casting out the evil angels. When the man wanted to follow Him, Jesus said, *“Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you” (Mark 5:19)*. The man did tell others so that at Jesus’ return, He was welcomed by all.

Today, the Pilgrims would be amazed at the way that God has provided for this nation. God the Father provides for our daily lives. The Son redeemed us for eternal life. It is only right that we should worship, pray, and sing to God to express our thanks so that more may call on Him and live thankfully. Amen.