

Can Thanksgiving Change Your Life?

<u>Psalm 95:2</u>: (NASB) Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.

There was once a time (and it seems that it was long ago!) when the whole idea of Thanksgiving as a holiday held deep and profound meaning. That seems kind



of funny to say because when we think of Thanksgiving now, what do we think of? Family, turkey, football, stuffing, days off, pumpkin pie, eating too much and thinking too little. Thanksgiving - the concept can change your life! It can take you from a crying heart to a contented spirit. It can alter what you see and how you see it. It can find hope and strength where there seemed only to be despair and weakness. Thanksgiving...how do we live it?

Thanksgiving as a holiday was originally about one thing and one thing only: a day to give honor to God for His deliverance. How do we know? Let's look at those who were there - what drove them? What made them go to the "New World?"

(Source: history.com) In 1608, a congregation of disgruntled English Protestants from the village of Scrooby, Nottinghamshire, left England and moved to Leyden, a town in Holland. These "Separatists" did not want to pledge allegiance to the Church of England, which they believed was nearly as corrupt and idolatrous as the Catholic Church it had replaced, any longer. (They were not the same as the Puritans, who had many of the same objections to the English church but wanted to reform it from within.) The Separatists hoped that in Holland, they would be free to worship, as they liked...

In fact, the Separatists (they called themselves "Saints") did find religious freedom in Holland, but they also found a secular life that was more difficult to navigate than

they'd anticipated. For one thing, Dutch craft guilds excluded the migrants, so they were relegated to menial, low-paying jobs. Even worse was Holland's easygoing, cosmopolitan atmosphere, which proved alarmingly seductive to some of the Saints' children. (These young people were "drawn away," Separatist leader William Bradford wrote, "by evill [sic] example into extravagance and dangerous courses.") For the strict, devout Separatists, this was the last straw. They decided to move again, this time to a place without government interference or worldly distraction: the "New World" across the Atlantic Ocean.







Luke 10:25-28: (NASB) ²⁵And a lawyer stood up and put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? ²⁶And he said to him, what is written in the Law? How does it read to you? ²⁷And he answered, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with you're your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. ²⁸And he said to him, you have answered correctly; do this and you will live.

...In August 1620, a group of about 40 Saints joined a much larger group of (comparatively) secular colonists -"Strangers," to the Saints - and set sail from England on two merchant ships: the Mayflower and the Speedwell. The Speedwell began to leak almost immediately, however, and the ships headed back to port. The travelers squeezed themselves and their belongings onto the Mayflower and set sail once again...

Because of the delay caused by the leaky Speedwell, the Mayflower had to cross the Atlantic at the height of storm season. As a result, the journey was horribly unpleasant.

The arrival, The Story of Thanksgiving, Zebtoonz

• (Plymouth Rock) Hi. My name is Plymouth, Plymouth Rock. Now, you might just wonder how a rock ever got a name like Plymouth. Well, let me tell you how it all happened. The year was 1620. It was a normal day for me sitting on the beach, getting some sun, minding my own business, when low and





behold, along comes this boat. And can you believe it, as big as I am it bumps into me! Ow!

- (Pilgrim) Who said that?
- (Other Pilgrim) I think it was the rock?
- (Pilgrim) The rock? Oh, whatever. Let's plant the flag shall we? I do hereby name this place, "Plymouth."
- (Other Pilgrim) Very nice. What about a name for the rock?
- (Pilgrim) I hear by name this rock, "Plymouth Rock."



Observations:

What do we know about those first pilgrims so far?

- They were thoroughly convicted by their beliefs.
- They were willing to uproot themselves for the sake of their beliefs.
- Their beliefs focused them on a God-first approach to all aspects of life.

Look around! Though they may be hard to find, modern-day examples of this kind of dedication are present and inspiring...

Introduction, Stories of Christian Persecution, The Helen Berhane Story (Helen is from Eritrea, a country in the Horn of Africa. Helen is an Eritrean Christian gospel singer who was one of an estimated 2,000 members of illegal evangelical church groups arrested in recent years according to the human rights group Amnesty International.)

• (Interviewer) "It was so cold during the night. You would suffer

hyperthermia; so hot during the day that your skin would burn to the edge of

the container. The bugs that bite you felt like fire all over your body. But like driving a nail into wood, every hit, every being and every blow to my body drew me closer to God." These are some of the notes I took when I got to spend a few days with a lady called Helen Berhane. What you don't understand or what you don't get when you first met Helen is her past. You see, Helen spent two-and-a-half years locked inside a metal shipping container for refusing to recant her faith.



Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow. – Melody Beattie

We MUST thank God for His plan of deliverance from sin!

<u>1 Corinthians 15:54-58</u>: (NASB) ⁵⁴But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵O death, where is your victory, O death where is your sting? ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.







At the first Thanksgiving, whom did they thank and what did they eat?

(1))Squanto helps, The Story of Thanksgiving, Zebtoonz

- (Plymouth Rock) Now, I don't know whose idea it was to try and build a settlement at the beginning of winter, but needless to say the Pilgrims had it pretty rough.
- (Pilgrim) How was your hunting? I'm hungry.
- (Other Pilgrim) Fish fillet, anyone?
- (Pilgrim) Oh Lord, please have mercy on us!
- (Other Pilgrim) Finally the long, hard winter passed and spring came - my favorite time of year. The sun was shining, the grass was growing, the birds were singing and the Pilgrims went out to plant.
- (Pilgrim) Number one: Dig hole. Check. Number two...
- (Other Pilgrim) You don't really know what you're doing, do ya?
- (Pilgrim) I admit it. I am not much of a farmer.
- (Plymouth Rock) But God had heard their prayers and sent along one of the locals to help them, an English-speaking Indian by the name of Squanto.
- (Squanto) Would you like some help?
- (Pilgrim) Yes, please.







(Source: history.com) The colonists spent the first winter, which only 53 passengers and half the crew survived, living onboard the Mayflower. (The Mayflower sailed back to England in April 1621.) Once they moved ashore, the colonists faced even more challenges. During their first winter in America, more than half of the Plymouth colonists died from malnutrition, disease and exposure to the harsh New England weather. In fact, without the help of the area's native people, it is likely that none of the colonists would have survived. An English-speaking Pawtuxet named Samoset helped the colonists form an alliance with the local Wampanoags, who taught them how to hunt local animals, gather shellfish and grow corn, beans and squash. At the end of the next summer, the Plymouth colonists celebrated their first successful harvest with a three-day festival of thanksgiving.

Squanto OR Samoset? (Source: Wikipedia) On March 16, 1621, Samoset entered the encampment at Plymouth, greeted the colonists in English, and asked for beer. After spending the night with the Pilgrims, he left to return with five others, who brought deerskins to trade. As it was Sunday, the colonists declined to trade that day, but offered them some food. On March 22, 1621, Samoset came back with Squanto, the last remaining Patuxet tribesman, who spoke much better English than he. Squanto arranged a meeting with Massasoit.

(Source: www.pilgrimhall.org) There are only two primary sources for the events of autumn 1621 in Plymouth: Edward Winslow's writing in *Mourt's Relation* and William Bradford's writing in *Of Plymouth Plantation*.

Mourt's Relation: (In modern spelling) "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."

Here is an example of a deep thanksgiving for simple things. We have lost that to a great deal in our society. What are we thankful for and can that gratitude change our lives? We must realize God is worthy of our thanks.







(1) Beat it out of you, Stories of Christian Persecution, The Helen Berhane Story

• She taught me one of the most profound spiritual lessons of my life. She taught me about thankfulness. If you were to wake up tomorrow with only the things you thanked God for today, what would you have? In Helen's case, every day for two-and-a-half years she woke up on the floor of a jagged metal shipping container, inside a prison where she was beaten and tortured regularly. But one of the most incredible stories for me is her response to a beating that very nearly took her life. You see, Helen had been writing notes of encouragement and sending them to fellow prisoners, putting Scriptures on them that she could memorize, and the guards came to her and said, "Helen, where is your Bible?" And she said, "I don't have one." And they said, "Is it in your head?" And she said, "Yes, it's in my head," and they said, "We're going to have to beat it out of you."

<u>2 Corinthians 11:21-29</u>: (NASB) ²¹To my shame I must say that we have been weak by comparison. But in whatever respect anyone else is bold–I speak in foolishness–I am just as bold myself. ²²Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. ²³Are they servants of Christ? –I speak as if insane–I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. ²⁴Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. ²⁶I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers among false brethren; ²⁷I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. ²⁹Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?



There was an extreme cost to the Apostle Paul for following Christ. We have a cause for gratitude when we have others who want to enter into our difficulties.

<u>Psalms 107:21-22</u>: (KJV) ²¹Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! ²²And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.



Why should we be thankful in our trials?

(Source: Wikipedia) *Of Plymouth Plantation:* (In modern spelling) "They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercised in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides, they had about a peck of meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports."



(1) Tradition begins, The Story of Thanksgiving, Zebtoonz

- (Plymouth Rock) So, with lots of hard work and working together with their new friends the Indians, by the end of the season they had an abundant harvest.
- (Pilgrim) God, we thank You for our families and friends and for Thine many blessings.
- (Squanto) Amen to that!
- (Other Pilgrim) Hey! We should do this every year.
- (Plymouth Rock) And so began the tradition of Thanksgiving. Family and friends get together to fellowship and eat and thank God for His many blessings. And as for me, for some reason they decided to give me a new home where lots of people come to visit me and take pictures. I am, of all rocks, most truly blessed. Happy Thanksgiving!



We know Thanksgiving did not take hold as a national holiday for a long time after, but we also know the celebration was not lost sight of in over 100 years in between.

Even long before there was any Proclamation from the Continental Congress, there was this from William Bradform in the year 1623 - two years after the first Thanksgiving:

Inasmuch as the great Father has given us this year an abundant harvest of Indian corn, wheat, peas, beans, squashes, and garden vegetables, and has made the forests to abound with game and the sea with fish and clams, and inasmuch as he has protected us from the ravages of the savages, has spared us from pestilence and disease, has granted us freedom to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience.

Now I, your magistrate, do proclaim that all ye Pilgrims, with your wives and ye little ones, do gather at ye meeting house, on ye hill, between the hours of 9 and 12 in the day time, on Thursday, November 29th, of the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred and twentythree and the third year since ye Pilgrims landed on ye Pilgrim Rock, there to listen to ye pastor and render thanksgiving to ye Almighty God for all His blessings.



--William Bradford, Ye Governor of Ye Colony



Their Thanksgiving was three hours in church, not three hours watching football on television!







This week a caller from Connecticut has been thinking of gratitude and how it is connected to courtesy. He offers this consideration: The person who joins the rat race and wins is still a rat.

We agree it is a good idea to slow down and absorb the experiences around us!

(1))I don't hate you, Stories of Christian Persecution, The Helen Berhane Story

• They proceeded to grab Helen and they dragged her to a courtyard, placed her in the middle and started to beat her with wooden battens. What she does next has single handedly changed my Christian walk forever. You see, in the middle of this beating, Helen stops and looks at the guy hitting her and says to him, "I do not hate you, for you are just carrying out an order, but you need to know that I'm carrying out an order too, and that's not to renounce Jesus. So, carry on."

Extreme experiences can lead to extreme gratitude, providing extreme peace.

Here is a scriptural example of that same persecution:

<u>Acts 16:22-25</u>: (NASB) ²²The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. ²³When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; ²⁴and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;





Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. — Melody Beattie

How do we encourage thanksgiving to God in others?

<u>2 Corinthians 9:10-15</u>: (NASB) ¹⁰Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; ¹¹you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. ¹²For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. ¹³Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, ¹⁴while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

And increase the harvest of your righteousness - although this talks about a physical harvest, there is another spiritual harvest of righteousness for which we should be striving. That is where our truest gratitude can find its roots - through the experiences and even the tragedies in our lives. Christian thanksgiving finds its momentum to be a life-changing experience.

When it comes to life the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude. – Gilbert K. Chesterton

Even before George Washington's proclamation, there was this:

The Very First Thanksgiving Proclamation made by the Continental Congress: IN CONGRESS November 1, 1777.

FORASMUCH as it is the indispensable Duty of all Men to adore the superintending Providence of Almighty God; to acknowledge with Gratitude



their Obligation to him for Benefits received, and to implore such farther Blessings as they stand in Need of: And it having pleased him in his abundant Mercy, not only to continue to us the innumerable Bounties of his common Providence; but also to smile upon us in the Prosecution of a just and necessary War, for the Defense and Establishment of our unalienable Rights and Liberties; particularly in that he hath been pleased, in so great a Measure, to prosper the Means used for the Support of our Troops, and to crown our Arms with most signal success:

It is therefore recommended to the legislative or executive Powers of these UNITED STATES to set apart THURSDAY, the eighteenth Day of December next, for SOLEMN THANKSGIVING and PRAISE: That at one Time and with one Voice, the good People may express the grateful Feelings of their Hearts, and consecrate themselves to the Service of their Divine Benefactor; and that, together with their sincere Acknowledgments and Offerings, they may join the penitent Confession of their manifold Sins, whereby they had forfeited every Favor; and their humble and earnest Supplication that it may please GOD through the Merits of JESUS CHRIST, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of Remembrance...

The last paragraph states: And it is further recommended, that servile Labor, and such Recreation, as, though at other Times innocent, may be unbecoming the Purpose of this Appointment, be omitted on so solemn an Occasion.

We are so self-absorbed and "entertainment-absorbed" that we have lost a sense of what true gratitude is.

(At birth, the umbilical cord strangled her for seven minutes. She survived with cerebral palsy and other disorders. She was not supposed to walk but now she can. She is thankful for her life so she can "help others who have really hard problems.")

Hey, Everyone! I am thankful for my life. When I was born, there was a knot in the cord and it was around my neck. I went without oxygen for seven whole minutes, and doctors said I wouldn't make it but I did! I was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy and Ataxia and was told I would be in a wheelchair all my life, but after years of therapies and hard work I went from walking with a walker to walking on crutches to walking on my own.



Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it. — William Arthur Ward

God's presence is appropriately approached with Thanksgiving - for He is our Creator! Here is the context of our theme Scripture:

<u>Psalm 95:1-6</u>: (NASB) ¹O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. ²Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. ³For the LORD is a great God and a great King above all gods, ⁴In whose hand are the depths of the earth, the peaks of the mountains are His also. ⁵The sea is His, for it was He who made it, and His hands formed the dry land. ⁶Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.



We should express our deep gratitude!

(1)) Thank you, Lord, Stories of Christian Persecution, The Helen Berhane Story

Carry on? I mean, when they were finished beating her they simply threw her body back into the metal shipping container, and as she lay on the floor in the container she began to sing the following: "Thank you for the cold nights, thank you for the hot days, thank you for the hunger, for the sickness. Thank you for the bugs that bite my body, thank you, Lord, thank you."

How do you get to that point?







Sometimes the most impactful gratitude (which usually happens in a time of private pain) finds its way to the ears and hearts of others to spur them on as well:

Psalm 100:1-5: (NASB) ¹Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. ²Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. ³Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. ⁴Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. 5For the LORD is good; His loving-kindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations.



THANKSGIVING DAY 1789, BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA -A PROCLAMATION

Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor - and Whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me "to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness."

Now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be – That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks – for his kind care and protection of the People of this country previous to their becoming a Nation – for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of his providence, which we experienced in the course and conclusion of the late war –for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed – for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national One now lately instituted, for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge; and in general for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us.

And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions – to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually – to render our national government a blessing to all the People, by constantly being a government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed – to protect and guide all Sovereigns and Nations (especially such as have shewn kindness unto us) and to bless them with good government, peace, and concord – To promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science among them and Us – and generally to grant unto all mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as he alone knows to be best.

Given under my hand at the City of New York the third day of October in the year of our Lord 1789. GO. WASHINGTON.





He focused on practicing religion with a national day of Thanksgiving and prayer - this is so different from today.

A caller from Connecticut thanked Christian Questions for helping her get through some issues. She looks forward to the program each Sunday.

We really appreciate that! Being a Christian does not mean being by yourself, but to be a picture of Jesus to those around you. We are to extend a hand and when we need to, to take a hand.

Do we ask God for more than we thank Him for?

(1) Thanks for much, Stories of Christian Persecution, The Helen Berhane Story

• Thankfulness. Have you ever stopped for a minute to think what role it plays in your life? I mean, what role thankfulness plays in your everyday? If you're like me, it's probably not much. You see, I ask God for a lot. But in comparison, I thank Him for very little. The more I think about people like Helen Berhane and the persecuted church, the more it begins to dawn on meit's actually reversed. You see, they thank God for almost everything. In comparison, they ask Him for very little.



Lesson for a TRUE and GODLY Thanksgiving



If we can find gratitude through our extreme experiences for God's overruling and care, we can begin to lock in the extraordinary peace of God to carry us. With such peace, nothing shakes us.

What is our focus when we pray?



Thankfulness is the beginning of gratitude. Gratitude is the completion of thankfulness. Thankfulness may consist merely of words. Gratitude is shown in acts. — Henri Frederic Amiel

We are to thank God by offering sacrifices of praise! Does that mean just a lot of emotion and singing? Not entirely...

The sacrifice of praise is all about the quality of our sacrificial life:

<u>Hebrews 13:15-19</u>: (NASB) ¹⁵Through him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. ¹⁶And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. ¹⁷Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. ¹⁸Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. ¹⁹And I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you the sooner.

We are to "do" and "live" our faith, not just "think" our faith. We want to make sure our lives are focused on what the Scriptures teach us and then be a shining example to those around us, just like the story of Helen Berhane.

Do we sacrifice begrudgingly? We may not like our present experience, but we can be thankful the Lord's hand is in it.

<u>1 Timothy 6:6-8</u>: (NASB) ⁶But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. ⁷For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.

True contentment is a result of true perspective. True perspective can only be achieved through true gratitude. True gratitude can only be mastered by applying our trials to holiness.

Our trials are there so we can become more holy, to be sanctified - set apart for holy service. If we are following Christ, our gratitude should echo through our experiences. Having a life of ease and comfort will not set us apart as it does not provoke us to focus on spirituality.

Our abundance is with God's peace, care, love and overruling.



Where should we look to begin to exercise our gratitude muscle?

(I)) Jesus saved all, Stories of Christian Persecution, The Helen Berhane Story

• Our gratitude, our thankfulness and the level by which we measure it, should not be based off a set of rules or expectations and buzzwords created by this Christian pop culture. It should be defined by Jesus Christ who walked with broken people, loved the unlovable, stood in the face of religion, led with a character and set of principles that he would not compromise for anyone or any deal. He didn't seem to care about things like brand, fashion label or return on investment or number of friends on Facebook, or followers on Instagram, and didn't mind looking awkward if saying "no" meant the right outcome was achieved. And on top of all that, loved a dying and broken world with a passion that could not be filled, stopped, watered down or contained. Jesus Christ ultimately laid down his life so that a sinful, broken and dislocated group of people could have eternal life with him, and for that I am forever thankful.

Sometimes our light goes out but is blown into flame by another human being. Each of us owes deepest thanks to those who have rekindled this light. — Albert Schweitzer

After seeing how the original Thanksgiving proclamation was entirely Godcentered, <u>Psalms 147</u> seems to fit well - the thankfulness and praise here bounces between the smallest human things and the largest heavenly things.

Setting the context of praise and thanksgiving:

<u>Psalms 147:1-20</u>: (NKJV) ¹Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful.

The first comparison:

²The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. ³He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. ⁴He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.

The outcasts of Jerusalem are compared with the stars - God has both in control.

The resulting praise:

⁵Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.

The second comparison (first half):

⁶The LORD lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground.

The resulting praise:

⁷Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; Sing praises on the harp to our God,

The second comparison (second half):

⁸who covers the heavens with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow on the mountains.

We acknowledge and praise that there is order and sense in the universe whether great or small. It is all infinitely complex, and God is in control.

The third comparison:

⁹He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry. ¹⁰He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. ¹¹The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy.



The resulting praise: ¹²Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!

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"I Am So Blessed," (chorus) Karen Drucker

I am so blessed, I am so blessed, I am so grateful for all that I have. I am so blessed, I am so blessed, I am so grateful I am so blessed.

The comparison:

¹³For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you. ¹⁴He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest wheat. ¹⁵He sends out His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly. ¹⁶He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes; ¹⁷He casts out His hail like morsels;

The resulting praise:

Who can stand before His cold? ¹⁸He sends out His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow. ¹⁹He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. ²⁰He has not dealt thus with any nation; And as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise the LORD!

God has two dwellings; one in heaven, and the other in a meek and thankful heart. – *Izaak Walton*

Whatever your trial or dilemma, try to apply extreme gratitude to the experience. Know God's hand is in it and His ultimate protection is with you. The result is the extreme hope and peace of God.

So, can Thanksgiving change your life? For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions... Think about it...!



And now <u>even more</u> to think about... only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!



First, a recipe for creating "Gratitude Momentum:"

1. Be aware of your surroundings and choose the environment in which you want your mind to flourish:

Psalms 1:1-3: (NKJV) ¹Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; ²But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. ³He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

2. Make a conscious effort to focus on Thanksgiving at a time when it can be high priority:

Psalms 4:3-8: (NASB) ³But know that the LORD has set apart the godly man for Himself; The LORD hears when I call to Him. ⁴Tremble, and do not sin; Meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. ⁵Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and trust in the LORD. ⁶Many are saying, who will show us any good?" Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O LORD! ⁷You have put gladness in my heart, more than when their grain and new wine abound. ⁸In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety.

3. Live firmly in the present - not with one foot in the past or the future:

Exodus 16:1-3: (NASB) ¹Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. ²The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³The sons of Israel said to them, would that we had died by the LORD'S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

How small did they think God was? Did they think he would miraculously deliver them only to starve them later? Interesting how their "selective memory" only focused on one thing - food...

Psalm 136:1: (ESV) Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Second, some miscellaneous history regarding Thanksgiving:

The 53 Pilgrims at the first Thanksgiving:

4 MARRIED WOMEN: Eleanor Billington, Mary Brewster, Elizabeth Hopkins, Susanna White Winslow.

5 ADOLESCENT GIRLS: Mary Chilton (14), Constance Hopkins (13 or 14), Priscilla Mullins (19), Elizabeth Tilley (14 or15) and Dorothy, the Carver's unnamed maidservant, perhaps 18 or 19.

9 ADOLESCENT BOYS: Francis & John Billington, John Cooke, John Crackston, Samuel Fuller (2d), Giles Hopkins, William Latham, Joseph Rogers, Henry Samson.

13 YOUNG CHILDREN: Bartholomew, Mary & Remember Allerton, Love & Wrestling Brewster, Humility Cooper, Samuel Eaton, Damaris and Oceanus Hopkins, Desire Minter, Richard More, Resolved & Peregrine White.

22 MEN: John Alden, Isaac Allerton, John Billington, William Bradford, William Brewster, Peter Brown, Francis Cooke, Edward Doty, Francis Eaton, [first name unknown] Elv, Samuel Fuller, Richard Gardiner, John Goodman, Stephen Christian Questions ©2015 all rights reserved



Hopkins, John Howland, Edward Lester, George Soule, Myles Standish, William Trevor, Richard Warren, Edward Winslow, Gilbert Winslow.

An exercise in comparison: First read the latest Thanksgiving Day Proclamation and then read Abraham Lincoln's 1863 proclamation, which began an unbroken chain of America celebrating Thanksgiving. What do you notice as the differences in focus and in whom to thank?

Presidential Proclamation -- Thanksgiving Day, 2015

THANKSGIVING DAY, 2015 BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA A PROCLAMATION

Rooted in a story of generosity and partnership, Thanksgiving offers an opportunity for us to express our gratitude for the gifts we have and to show our appreciation for all we hold dear. Today, as we give of ourselves in service to others and spend cherished time with family and friends, we give thanks for the many blessings bestowed upon us. We also honor the men and women in uniform who fight to safeguard our country and our freedoms so we can share occasions like this with loved ones, and we thank our selfless military families who stand beside and support them each and every day.

Our modern celebration of Thanksgiving can be traced back to the early 17th century. Upon arriving in Plymouth, at the culmination of months of testing travel that resulted in death and disease, the Pilgrims continued to face great challenges. An indigenous people, the Wampanoag, helped them adjust to their new home, teaching them critical survival techniques and important crop cultivation methods. After securing a bountiful harvest, the settlers and Wampanoag joined in fellowship for a shared dinner to celebrate powerful traditions that are still observed at Thanksgiving today: lifting one another up, enjoying time with those around us, and appreciating all that we have.

Carrying us through trial and triumph, this sense of decency and compassion has defined our Nation. President George Washington proclaimed the first Thanksgiving in our country's nascence, calling on the citizens of our fledgling democracy to place their faith in "the providence of Almighty God," and to be thankful for what is bequeathed to us. In the midst of bitter division at a critical juncture for America, President Abraham Lincoln acknowledged the plight of the most vulnerable, declaring a "day of thanksgiving," on which all citizens would "commend to [God's] tender care" those most affected by the violence of the time -- widows, orphans, mourners, and sufferers of the Civil War. A tradition of giving continues to inspire this holiday, and at shelters and food centers, on battlefields and city streets, and through generous donations and silent prayers, the inherent selflessness and common goodness of the American people endures.

In the same spirit of togetherness and thanksgiving that inspired the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag, we pay tribute to people of every background and belief who contribute in their own unique ways to our country's story. Each of us brings our own traditions, cultures, and recipes to this quintessential American holiday -- whether around dinner tables, in soup kitchens, or at home cheering on our favorite sports teams -- but we are all united in appreciation of the



bounty of our Nation. Let us express our gratitude by welcoming others to our celebrations and recognize those who volunteer today to ensure a dinner is possible for those who might have gone without. Together, we can secure our founding ideals as the birthright of all future generations of Americans.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 26, 2015, as a National Day of Thanksgiving. I encourage the people of the United States to join together -- whether in our homes, places of worship, community centers, or any place of fellowship for friends and neighbors -- and give thanks for all we have received in the past year, express appreciation to those whose lives enrich our own, and share our bounty with others.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand fifteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fortieth.

BARACK OBAMA

THE FIRST IN AN UNBROKEN SERIES OF AUTUMN PROCLAMATIONS: THANKSGIVING DAY 1863

BY ABRAHAM LINCOLN, THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA - A PROCLAMATION

The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added which are of so extraordinary a nature that they can not fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequaled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign states to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theater of military conflict, while that theater has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union. Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship; the ax has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battlefield, and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they 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 next as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore if, as soon as may be consistent with the divine purpose, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity, and union. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this 3d day of October A.D. 1863, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty-eighth. ABRAHAM LINCOLN

(Source: history.com) (Entire article from which we quoted)

In September 1620, a merchant ship called the Mayflower set sail from Plymouth, a port on the southern coast of England. Typically, the Mayflower's cargo was wine and dry goods, but on this trip the ship carried passengers: 102 of them, all hoping to start a new life on the other side of the Atlantic. Nearly 40 of these passengers were Protestant Separatists-they called themselves "Saints"-who hoped to establish a new church in the New World. Today, we often refer to the colonists who crossed the Atlantic on the Mayflower as "Pilgrims."

PILGRIMS BEFORE THE MAYFLOWER In 1608, a congregation of disgruntled English Protestants from the village of Scrooby, Nottinghamshire, left England and moved to Leyden, a town in Holland. These "Separatists" did not want to pledge allegiance to the Church of England, which they believed was nearly as corrupt and idolatrous as the Catholic Church it had replaced, any longer. (They were not the same as the Puritans, who had many of the same objections to the English church but wanted to reform it from within.) The Separatists hoped that in Holland, they would be free to worship as they liked

DID YOU KNOW? The Separatists who founded the Plymouth Colony referred to themselves as "Saints," not "Pilgrims." The use of the word "Pilgrim" to describe this group did not become common until the colony's bicentennial.

In fact, the Separatists (they called themselves "Saints") did find religious freedom in Holland, but they also found a secular life that was more difficult to navigate than they'd anticipated. For one thing, Dutch craft guilds excluded the migrants, so they were relegated to menial, low-paying jobs. Even worse was Holland's easygoing, cosmopolitan atmosphere, which proved alarmingly seductive to some of the Saints' children. (These young people were "drawn away," Separatist leader William Bradford wrote, "by evill [sic] example into



extravagance and dangerous courses.") For the strict, devout Separatists, this was the last straw. They decided to move again, this time to a place without government interference or worldly distraction: the "New World" across the Atlantic Ocean.

THE MAYFLOWER First, the Separatists returned to London to get organized. A prominent merchant agreed to advance the money for their journey. The Virginia Company gave them permission to establish a settlement, or "plantation," on the East Coast between 38 and 41 degrees north latitude (roughly between the Chesapeake Bay and the mouth of the Hudson River). And the King of England gave them permission to leave the Church of England, "provided they carried themselves peaceably."

In August 1620, a group of about 40 Saints joined a much larger group of (comparatively) secular colonists-"Strangers," to the Saints-and set sail from England on two merchant ships: the Mayflower and the Speedwell. The Speedwell began to leak almost immediately, however, and the ships headed back to port. The travelers squeezed themselves and their belongings onto the Mayflower and set sail once again.

Because of the delay caused by the leaky Speedwell, the Mayflower had to cross the Atlantic at the height of storm season. As a result, the journey was horribly unpleasant. Many of the passengers were so seasick they could scarcely get up, and the waves were so rough that one "Stranger" was swept overboard and drowned. (It was "the just hand of God upon him," Bradford wrote later, for the young sailor had been "a proud and very profane yonge man.")

THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT After two miserable months at sea, the ship finally reached the New World. There, the Mayflower's passengers found an abandoned Indian village and not much else. They also found that they were in the wrong place: Cape Cod was located at 42 degrees north latitude, well north of the Virginia Company's territory. Technically, the Mayflower colonists had no right to be there at all. In order to establish themselves as a legitimate colony ("Plymouth," named after the English port from which they had departed) under these dubious circumstances, 41 of the Saints and Strangers drafted and signed a document they called the Mayflower Compact. This Compact promised to create a "civil Body Politick" governed by elected officials and "just and equal laws." It also swore allegiance to the English king.

PLYMOUTH COLONY AND THE FIRST THANKSGIVING The colonists spent the first winter, which only 53 passengers and half the crew survived, living onboard the Mayflower. (The Mayflower sailed back to England in April 1621.) Once they moved ashore, the colonists faced even more challenges. During their first winter in America, more than half of the Plymouth colonists died from malnutrition, disease and exposure to the harsh New England weather. In fact, without the help of the area's native people, it is likely that none of the colonists would have survived. An English-speaking Pawtuxet named Samoset helped the colonists form an alliance with the local Wampanoags, who taught them how to hunt local animals, gather shellfish and grow corn, beans and squash. At the end of the next summer, the Plymouth colonists celebrated their



first successful harvest with a three-day festival of thanksgiving. We still commemorate this feast today.

Eventually, the Plymouth colonists were absorbed into the Puritan Massachusetts Bay Colony. Still, the Mayflower Saints and their descendants remained convinced that they alone had been specially chosen by God to act as a beacon for Christians around the world. "As one small candle may light a thousand," Bradford wrote, "so the light here kindled hath shone to many, yea in some sort to our whole nation."

