

A CALL TO THANKSGIVING

The American custom of observing one day in the year as a national day of Thanksgiving is a good one. While its observance is often defective, it is a public acknowledgment of Divine sovereignty and human dependence, implying obligations to God and to our fellow men. In so far as it is observed in the right spirit and with suitable conduct, it has a salutary effect upon individuals and upon society as a whole.

While this day of national thanksgiving has become one of the fixed institutions of our fair land, it should be more than a mere festival observed out of habit. Thankfulness should be our daily attitude. If there be no such undersong of gratitude in the life, then there is no genuine gratitude at all. Not pleasing unto God is that thanksgiving which is occasional unless it is the expression of a thanksgiving which is continuous.

Thanksgiving wells up most profusely in the hearts of those who do a lot of thinking. Permit me to remind you that the words think and thank come from the same root. Those who take time to think also take time to thank. Unthankful people are unthinking people. It is a matter of choice whether we are thankful or thankless. It is even possible to judge another's refinement by his sense of gratitude. In fact, gratitude is one of the most beautiful and fragrant flowers that grows and blooms in the soil of the human soul. On the other hand, ingratitude grieves the heart of God. Even a human heart, with all its weaknesses and inconsistencies, is hurt by ingratitude. How much more, then, must it be displeasing to God when we neglect to thank Him! Having been the recipients of so many blessings, it is certainly appropriate for us to thank and to praise the Giver for what has been and is being received from Him. Therefore, our thanksgiving is an expression of gratitude for blessings received. Such thanksgiving cheers the heart of the Giver and makes glad the heart of the receiver.

Thankfulness is an obligation resting upon all, irrespective of their attitude to the claims of the Christian Gospel. Every man is indebted to God, whether he acknowledges God or not, or whether he acknowledged his debt or not. The fact that God does something for every man means that every man is under a moral obligation to express his humble thanksgiving to God. Do not be one of those thoughtless individuals who pass through life receiving all, enjoying all, and expecting all without bestowing a thought on the bountiful Giver. Giving thanks to God for His bountiful blessings is always a comely thing for us to do. The acknowledgment of favors received is not only kindly and courteous but just and honorable.

The approaching national Thanksgiving Day brings to us another wonderful opportunity to express our gratitude to God for His goodness to us during the past year. It comes to remind us of the debt of gratitude we owe to Him for the life and the blessings that He has so lovingly bestowed upon us. Let us appreciate, exercise, and enjoy this God-given privilege. The person who says that he has nothing to be thankful for is to be pitied. Although some are inclined to think only of the disappointments of life, still life is never so dark but what one can find many reasons for thanksgiving. Our blessings always outweigh our misfortunes. Thinking of the good things we have received takes the mind away from the cares of daily routine, and the petty trials of life, and lifts the soul to thoughts sublime. In such a frame of mind one cannot harbor ill will toward any, or be disposed to utter ugly words to or about others.

Abundant reasons for genuine thanksgiving are to be found in different things.

I. The Material Blessings We Have Received.

1. This wonderful world.

Let us be thankful for this beautiful and glorious world in which we live; for the wonder of seedtime, summer and autumn harvest; for the spur of necessity which impels industry; and for the stores of material good for our use and welfare. For us the rains descend; for us the brooks murmur; for us the rivers flow; for us the

seas open their bosoms to admit our commerce; and for us the sun sheddeth abroad its creative beams. We enjoy the splendors of the sunrise, and the ordered coming of the seasons. Proof that this is a wonderful world is indeed abundant when we take note of the chirping of the birds outside our bedroom windows at the break of day, the fragrance of the beautiful flowers wafted in on the morning breeze, the fleecy clouds changing from one color to another in the early dawn, the fertile valleys, beautiful hills, quiet lakes, rippling rills, rushing rivers, restless seas, mighty forests, towering mountains, glorious sunset, silvery moon, and twinkling stars. Let us thank God for every beam of light that delights our eyes, every breath of air that cheers our spirits, every drop of water that quenches our thirst, every bite of food that satisfied our hunger, and every minute of comfortable repose.

2. This great nation.

There is much in our land to arrest the attention, excite the interest and admiration, and to swell with pride the heart of every citizen. There is its great extent from ocean to ocean, its vast and varied productions, its diversified scenery -- which is beautiful, attractive, grand, picturesque, and sublime as seen in its widespread, waving forests, its boundless flower-decked prairies, its rolling rivers, rushing cataracts, stupendous waterfalls and numerous lakes, its snow-capped mountains, its great institutions, and its wonderful progress in all the elements of national greatness. We are not grateful enough for the blessings and advantages we enjoy in this great nation, such as freedom of speech, press, assembly, and religion. We should be more grateful for our beautiful homes, labor-saving devices, numerous means of transportation, and world-wide communication by newspaper, telegraph, telephone and radio. I call you to a new appreciation of the privileges and responsibilities that are yours as citizens in this great country.

II. The Social Blessings Which We Enjoy.

1. Our families.

2. Our friends.

God not only gives us parents honest and good, but also teachers interested and kind, benefactors never to be forgotten, fellow Christians congenial and helpful, and friends tried and true. How we need to thank Him for helpful friends and benefactors! We may not have many friends, but if we have a few who are kind and faithful we shall never be poor. In fact, one is rich just in proportion to the number of true friends of the right sort which he has. We may well rejoice that through our earthly pilgrimage we have been cheered, encouraged, and helped by those faithful and understanding people whom we are privileged to call our friends. To feel that we live in the hearts of others, and to know that others live in ours; to be growing rich in loyal friends; to have some intimate associate who will always tell us the truth, and cheer us up when we are misunderstood, and stand by us when we are down -- these are priceless privileges.

III. The Spiritual Blessings Which We Enjoy.

1. The Scriptures.

Bible is the loveliest and best of all books to guide us in our glooms, direct us in our doubts, help us in our hazards, prompt us in our perplexities, and be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our pathway. Scriptures ought to be in our homes, our hands, our heads, our hearts, and our habits.

2. The churches.

Our churches are institutions which concern conscience, convictions, character, consecration, conduct, and charity. They urge understanding, unselfishness, and usefulness. They call for courtesy, cheerfulness, compassion, courage, and cooperation. They are necessary institutions, the best teachers of righteousness which we have, the friends of childhood, the inspirers of youth, the strengtheners of middle life, and the comforters of old age.

Let us thank God not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving our best to Him in Christian service. In the words of Fred Scott Shepard: