

## Sermon Message 11-22-15

Grace, Mercy and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and risen Savior Jesus Christ.

I always give thanks to be in fellowship with other believers as we join together to worship and praise our Lord with the spiritual sacrifices of song, prayer and thanksgiving by the power, guidance and encouragement of the Word. We are truly blessed to call each other brothers and sisters in Christ.

In today's Gospel message from Luke, ten suffering souls called out to Jesus from a distance. By His word they began to be healed. We don't know whether nine of them went to the priests as he directed, but we do know that one of them returned to give thanks. Ten were healed but one returned to worship and praise the Lord. As we gathered here today consider how we, and all of our brothers and sisters in Christ, fit into this message.

The Order of our worship today is a "Service of Thanksgiving". We began by reading a proclamation delivered by one of our nations most recognized presidents, Abraham Lincoln. In the midst of turmoil and distress he called on a divided country, longing to heal, to turn and give thanks to the Most High God for the gracious gifts He has provided.

Lincoln's Thanksgiving Proclamation was not the first one to recognize a "Public Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer". In 1789 our first President, George Washington, proclaimed that the last Thursday in November, Nov 26<sup>th</sup>, "to be devoted by the people of these States to the service of the great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, 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....and in general for all the great and various favors which He has been pleased to confer upon us. And 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."

Throughout the decades that followed, subsequent Presidents have issued Thanksgiving Proclamations, but the dates and even the months of celebrations varied. President Lincoln's Proclamation called for the National Day of Thanksgiving to be celebrated on the last Thursday of November. Both Lincoln and Washington were working to bring their countrymen together during and after tumultuous and turbulent times to unite in recognition of the goodness, grace and mercy of an Almighty God. Today we too are called to unite under the Cross of Christ as we deal with the stress, turmoil and confusion in our own lives and the life of our congregation.

From God's first promise to provide the world with a Savior, to the coming of the Christ and Jesus's birth, death and resurrection man has turned toward God and turned away from Him again. But, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness through faith in His Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ through reconciliation by His Word and by the Power of the Holy Spirit.

Our National Day of Thanksgiving was jostled around in the late 1930's. In 1939, because the last Thursday in November fell on the last day of the month, it was feared that the shortened Christmas shopping season would dampen the economic recovery that was needed for the health of the nation. A proclamation by President Franklin D Roosevelt moved the Day of Thanksgiving to the second to the last Thursday in November. 32 states issued a similar proclamation, 16 states refused to change. **(Talk about choosing sides and resistance to change.)** For the next two years the divide remained; the leaders and people of the States did not agree on when or possibly even how to "all unite in rendering unto God our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection"

In October 1941, by an Act of Congress, the House and Senate passed a resolution establishing the day for a National Holiday of Thanksgiving as the fourth Thursday in November. The nation was again unified and President Roosevelt signed the resolution on Dec 26, 1941.

But that's only part of the story. What else happened in December 1941? What day was given the title "the day that will live in infamy"? December 7<sup>th</sup> 1941. Ray Wands can vividly recall that day. Are there any other times in the nation's history that more closely connect the threats to liberty and justice experienced in the 1776 and 1941? The uncertainty of the times caused the nation and its people to turn to God; "that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayer and supplications" on the Day of Thanksgiving.

What a history lesson, right? But how are things any different today than they were 75, 152, 239 or nearly 2000 years ago.

The Body of Christ, the Church, is God's ministry and salvation offered to all people is God's mission. As members of the Body of Christ, as disciples of Jesus, we are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that we may declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light" .....That doesn't change, God's will doesn't change. We change. Over time or based on circumstances in our lives and in our communities our trust in God and our faith in Jesus Christ may fade and the light of Christ that is within us may grow dim. But the light from God is always on, even though sometimes in our hearts it may seem that nobody's home.

Even now we, as a nation, may be slowly losing our enthusiasm to praise and thank God the creator on Thanksgiving Day.... Just think of it, the day after the day we should pause and thank Him is now called "Black Friday". Now I know the phrase has much more in common with switching the Thursday of Thanksgiving in 1939. But it's odd to see how Black Friday has been slipping into Thanksgiving Day Thursday (and NFL Football) over the past decade, to the point that it is almost its own holiday, with merchants and car dealers starting their "Black Friday Sale" advertising right after Halloween. **Now that's a real scary paring.** But that's a subject for another sermon.

"God so loved the world that He gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life" God's promise of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ does not change no matter when, where and how frequently we turn to him for help and forgiveness.

In today's Deuteronomy scripture reading, God's gifts to his people were given freely; the manna they ate, the clothes that didn't wear out, the land that they would enter and process, all available not by their works, but by the recognition that it all came from God, that man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord and not by the bread of our works. We are to praise the Lord our God for the good he has given us. All of his goodness; even those things we don't recognize as good at the time.

Paul tells us to be content. Like Paul many of us have known what it is to be in need, and know what it is to have plenty.... And most of us would prefer the life of plenty. But plenty of what? Wealth, riches, position, power or God's grace, goodness, mercy and peace? Paul's secret to being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want; is in letting God's will be done. For he knows, and we should know, that we can do everything through him who gives us strength. In my life I know I've had some pretty big ideas and plans, and I'm sure some of you have as well. Marilee can attest to some of my crazy ideas, but we can both look back and believe God was smiling as he blew up my ideas and changed our direction towards his will, plan and purpose.

Again I give thanks to all of God's children gathered here. I pray for those that are not with us today, that they may share in the love of Jesus that sustains us as a family of believers.

I ask the Lord to open our eyes and hearts to recognize his hand in our lives and to thank him and our friends and family for the joy that they bring to us and the wisdom to let God and the Holy Spirit guide us on Thanksgiving Day and in the coming months.

May we always come together as suffering souls to receive the forgiveness of our sins and be cleansed by your word through the love of Jesus by the power of your Holy Spirit.

As Paul writes to the Philippians; Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.... May the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen.

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