

[Readings: Sirach 50:22-24; Psalm 67; 1 Cor. 1:3-9; Luke 17:11-19]

It's a story of sacrifice and survival; partnership and progress.

It was our country's very first Thanksgiving.

Imagine the challenges the first settlers endured in 1620. They left everyone they knew and everything that was familiar. The Mayflower carried 102 voyagers across the Atlantic on a 66-day journey full of sickness and storms. That winter, nearly half of the voyagers died from disease and lack of shelter.

Yet, when the harvest season arrived, they set aside three full days to give thanks. In spite of the hardships, there was still much to be grateful for. They were alive. They were welcomed as strangers into a new land. The natives taught them how to grow their own crops. They had food to eat and friends to share it with. And... they had religious freedom, which is the very reason they came.

The settlers' simple decision to be intentionally grateful led to centuries of Americans doing the same every November.

Let's be real though. In some seasons of life, being grateful is just plain hard. We find ourselves overwhelmed with circumstances and underwhelmed with relationships. With preoccupied minds and aching hearts, it goes against our nature to give thanks anyway. But that's exactly what the Lord asks of us.

*Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. [1 Thessalonians 5:18.](#)*

But...

How can we give thanks if we lost our job?

How can we give thanks if we've been diagnosed with a disease?

How can we give thanks if we can't conceive?

How can we give thanks if our friend refuses to talk to us?

How can we give thanks if we are spending the holidays alone...again?

How can we give thanks if our marriage is falling apart?

How can we give thanks if our child is suffering?

How can we give thanks if we lost a loved one?

How can we give thanks if we don't know what the future holds?

Because even though we are struggling, our God is still sacred.

In each difficult situation, our Creator gives us glimpses of hope in a sacred silver lining. It's the place where God is working all things together for good. It's where the hidden blessings are stored. They aren't always easy to find, but they're always there.

The secret to giving thanks in all circumstances is to find His sacred lining.

**We will find His sacred lining when we give thanks for what we do have, instead of complaining about what we don't have.** *Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.* [Philippians 4:11-13.](#)

**We will find His sacred lining when we give thanks for what is right instead of worrying about what is wrong.** *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.* [Philippians 4:6-7.](#)

**We will find His sacred lining when we give thanks for the process instead of grumbling about the problem.**

*We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.* [Romans 5:3-5.](#)

**We will find His sacred lining when we give thanks to God first.**

*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.* [Psalm 118:1.](#)

Before we gather around the table this year, gobbling up turkey and a slice of pumpkin pie, let's be intentional about giving thanks no matter what. We can

be personal about it by starting [a gratitude journal](#), or we can share it with others in a prayer before dinner. Yes, circumstances can be challenging. Yes, relationships can be broken. But we serve a God who is for us, not against us. There is a holy gift waiting for us amidst the hardship. Let's look hard for His sacred lining and give thanks to God when we find it, not just on Thanksgiving, but every day. AMEN!