

Hymns: 81 We Gather Together 5 Count Your Blessings

Good Morning

Our scripture text for today is just one verse. It comes from Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 20:

[20] Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Happy Holidays to you. I hope you had a great Turkey Day---a time to:

1. Get together with family and friends
2. Feast on turkey, dressing, cranberry sauce, candied yams, and pumpkin pie.
3. Unbuckle your belt and gather around the TV and watch parades and football
 - Bowl games
 - NFL football with:
 - John Madden (now retired)
 - Pat Summerall (now retired)
 - Six-legged turkey
4. Prepare for the biggest shopping day of the year---Black Friday

You may recall last month we learned that Halloween ranked seventh behind Father's Day for holiday spending according to the 2010 IBIS World survey. Well, in that same survey, Thanksgiving ranked second, only behind Christmas. That's a lot of turkey and fixin's.

While certainly celebrating and festivity has it's place, there comes a point where the meaning of the day can be overshadowed by it all---which leads us to wonder what ever happened to giving thanks? It's times like these when the moral decline of our once godly country comes sharply into focus.

Of course, we shouldn't be surprised by all of this. The Bible says that ungodly men are **not thankful** (Romans 1:21).

Romans 1

[18] For **the wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

[19*] Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

[20*] For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that **they are without excuse**:

[21] Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, **neither were thankful**; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

[22] **Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,**

For a few moments we're going to set aside all of this revelry and review what Thanksgiving is really about. Where did it come from, and what does the Bible say about Thanksgiving?

Thanksgiving originated in the New World in 1621 when Plymouth Colony governor William Bradford, after a year-long bitter struggle, invited local Indians to join the Pilgrims in a three-day

celebration of the bounty of their harvest. By the 19th century most states designated the last Thursday of November as Thanksgiving Day. In 1863, Abraham Lincoln proclaimed Thanksgiving a national holiday. In 1941, Congress changed Thanksgiving Day to the fourth Thursday of November.

Thanksgiving in the Bible

We know the roots of Thanksgiving are clearly Christian as the godly, devout Pilgrims instituted it. In fact, the KJV Bible contains 139 references to some form of the word “thank” which includes 28 occurrences of the specific word “thanksgiving.”

Sometimes a “first reference” in the Bible to a particular word can be enlightening. In this case, “thanksgiving” first appears in Leviticus 7:12-15. For our purposes, the important thing to note there was that some sacrifices were made as offerings of **thanksgiving** to the Lord even by the ancient Jews.

Where else in the Bible do we find Thanksgiving? As you might expect, the Psalms contain many references to the word. Here are some examples:

Psalm 69

[30] I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with **thanksgiving**.

Psalm 95

[1] O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

[2] Let us come before his presence with **thanksgiving**, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

[3] For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

Psalm 100

[4] Enter into his gates with **thanksgiving**, and into his courts with praise: **be thankful** unto him, and bless his name.

[5] For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

Psalm 147

[7] Sing unto the LORD with **thanksgiving**; sing praise upon the harp unto our God:

Other famous instances of giving thanks:

1. Remember in Daniel chapter 6 Daniel defied the king's order and gave thanks to God in full view of others:

[10*] Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and **gave thanks before his God**, as he did aforetime.

2. Another famous time of rejoicing and giving of thanks to God came during the time of the birth of Jesus:

Shepherds Luke 2:20

[20*] And the shepherds returned, **glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen**, as it was told unto them.

Luke 2:36-38 Anna in the temple, **gave thanks** when she saw her redeemer, the baby Jesus.

Now as part of the Thanksgiving tradition of past days, Christians would pause before dinner and offer a prayer of thanks to God. Where did that practice come from? Do we find that in the Bible? Yes, we do.

Example of Christ:

Feeding 5000:

Matthew 14:19 blessed; Mark 6:41 blessed; Luke 9:16 blessed;

John 6:11,23 had given thanks

John 6

[10*] And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

[11] And Jesus took the loaves; and **when he had given thanks**, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

Feeding 4000: Matthew 15:36 gave thanks; Mark 8:6

Last Supper: Matthew 26:26-27; Mark 14:22-23; Luke 22:17,19

Emmaus disciples: Luke 24:30 blessed

Lord's Supper: I Corinthians 10:16 bless; **11:23-24** gave thanks

I Corinthians 11

[23] For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

[24] And **when he had given thanks**, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

[25] **After the same manner** also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

Example of the Apostle Paul:

Trip to Rome: Acts 27:35 In the midst of a storm that would destroy their ship, the Apostle Paul, a prisoner, before eating "gave thanks to God in the presence of them all." It's relatively easy to give thanks for blessings and bounty, but it's a much harder thing to be thankful to God in times of trial, trouble, and want.

Okay, Jesus and Paul gave thanks before meals. Does that mean that we should too? Yes, the Bible says that we should follow their example:

In I Corinthians 11:1 the Apostle Paul said,

[1] Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

And in Philippians 3 he said again,

[17] Brethren, be followers together of me...

In addition to following these examples, Christians are *exhorted* to thankfulness. Note here I specifically used the word *exhorted* rather than *commanded*. As we are about to see, victorious Christian living is not based on rules and commands, but plugging into the right power source.

Colossians 3

[15] And let **the peace of God rule in your hearts**, to the which also ye are called in one body; and **be ye thankful**.

...which brings us back to our text for today:

[20] Giving thanks **always** for **all things** unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

It kind of begs a question doesn't it?

“Who is giving thanks?” Let's widen our view to verse 19.

Ephesians 5

[18] And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

[19] Speaking to **yourselves** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody **in your heart** to the Lord;

[20] Giving thanks | **always** | for all things | unto God and the Father | in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

The pronoun *your* tells us the answer to the question “Who?”

Which brings us to the whole concept of Bible interpretation and the inductive method in particular. When I began studying the Bible as a young man, I adopted a similar approach on my own. I first learned of the inductive system from a book written by Dr. Howard Hendricks and have more recently used it in many Precepts Bible studies. What is the method?

In a nutshell, it uses the Bible to interpret the Bible. It's been said, “The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible.”

1. Observation (What does it say?) Be a detective. Examine the text carefully.
 - Probe
 - 5 W's and H
 - Context
 - Repeated words and phrases

- Setting
 - Lists
 - Sentence structure
2. Interpretation (What does it mean?)
- Normal, natural, literal meaning. “When plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense.”
 - Context rules interpretation
 - Consistency with rest of the Bible
3. Application (How does this apply to me?)
- II Timothy 3 [16] All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
 - Is this scripture teaching me something about God and His purposes?
 - Does it point to an area in my life where I fall short?
 - Does it direct my steps from error to truth?
 - Does it make clear the way of right living before God?

So let's dive into our text (just nineteen words) and see what treasures we can discover.

Observation (What does it mean?)

Interrogative words:

Pronouns:

Who:

- By: Apostle Paul (1:1) from prison (3:1; 4:1; 6:20) [1] **Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ** by the will of God, **to** the saints which are at Ephesus, and **to the faithful in Christ Jesus:**
- To: Ephesians (1:1) saints (Christians)
- The answer to Who? is **We**

What: 5:20 (our text verse) giving thanks to God for **all things**

Adverbs:

When: 5:20 (our text verse) always

Where: 5:19 in your heart → not just a show of thanks but a genuine, heartfelt thanks

Why:

- 2:4 God's love (II Corinthians 5:14) because He first loved us, we respond in love to Him

- 4:1 Worthy walk of the calling to which we were called

How:

- 5:18 by the outflowing of God's Spirit from us (Romans 8:9)
- In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Asserting our kinship with Christ
- By the authority of Jesus Christ who intercedes for us Romans 8:34

Interpretation (What does it mean?)

We are to give thanks to God our Father **always** and **for all things** through the power of His Spirit in us, claiming our position in Christ by His authority.

Now, this *sounds* difficult if not impossible. Does it really mean *all things* and *always*?

always: Greek pä'n-to-te → always

all things: Greek: pä's → all things

Just to make it certain that this is no fluke, the same words are used:

I Thessalonians 5

[16] Rejoice evermore. (same Greek word as always)

[17] Pray without ceasing.

[18] **In every thing give thanks:** for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Yes, it's a very high standard.

Application (What does it mean to me?)

Are you thankful this Thanksgiving season? Am I? Are we thankful even when it's unnatural and difficult to do?

Job 1

[21*] *And said, **Naked came I out** of my mother's womb, and **naked shall I return** thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; **blessed be the name of the LORD.***

Apostle Paul (II Corinthians 12)

[9*] *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. **Most gladly** therefore will I rather **glory in my infirmities**, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

[10*] *Therefore **I take pleasure in** infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

If we don't measure up to this standard, we need to seek God's help to better honor Him with our lives. We can remain confident that God is good and to the extent we allow Him, He through His Spirit working in us, will order our lives for our ultimate good (Romans 8:28, 37) and empower us to be truly thankful.

[28] And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the

called according to his purpose.

[37] Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Benediction

***Blessing**, and glory, and wisdom, and **thanksgiving**, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 7:12)*

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