

GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD

This year we all will be celebrating Thanksgiving a little differently because of COVID-19. In some states the government is limiting the number of people who can gather together over at someone's home. Some states are requesting that you do not even gather together with family and friends but rather simply stay home and celebrate it quietly. As we already know there are many states that will not allow people to gather together to worship or they are limiting the number of people who can gather at a local body of Christ.

In other words, there are those who are trying to make Thanksgiving something that it was not meant to be and the true meaning of it is being lost in the shuffle. So what is "Thanksgiving" and when was the first one held? The first thing we must remember is that days of giving thanks to God have been in operation for a very long time. There have been days set aside throughout the year for giving thanks for the various harvests that were reaped. In the United States, however, it is believed that it began with the early colonists, the Puritans, and the Wampanoag Indians, known also as the Massasoit, in October of 1621.

The Puritans celebrated their good harvest by shooting their guns in the air because of the harvest they had procured. The Wampanoag heard the guns and came to check out what was going on. They had come ready to go to battle. The Wampanoag stayed in the woods checking out the colonists. It is not quite sure how they finally did get together but they did end up eating together for three days. The Wampanoag went back to their tribe and there was peace between them and the colonists.

The above "Thanksgiving" celebration was much different than what the Puritans were used to doing prior to coming to America. In fact, previously, they would have fasted instead of feasting, spending several days in church praising and worshipping God. However, now in this country, because they had finally been able to overcome sickness and very difficult situations in this new land, they chose to have this time of celebration because it looked as though, at this time, their lot was changing. Their minds and hearts were set on "thanking God."

Afterwards, there were times of thanksgiving sporadically held throughout the early years of our nation. However, nothing really had stuck. Then in 1862, President Lincoln, at the writing and requesting of a long time advocate of a "day of thanksgiving," Sarah Hale, editor of Godey's Lady's Book, had finally established the first "Thanksgiving Day." Ms. Hale held a 17 year campaign for establishing a "Day of Thanksgiving." She wrote to President Lincoln that a "national feeling of Thanksgiving" would benefit the country in the midst of the Civil War. It was at that time in which President Lincoln had established the last Thursday in November to have a day of "national thanksgiving."

There were many revisions throughout the years but it was in Franklin D. Roosevelt's time of being in the Presidency that they finally established the 4th Thursday of the month of November to be a day of "national Thanksgiving." However, unfortunately, even at that time, it was really established to appease the "National Retail Dry Goods Association" as the beginning of the Christmas season and thereby the Christmas buying season. The good thing about it was that even though it may have been started for the wrong reason, it ended up being a day of giving thanks to the living God for all that He had done and provided.

Unfortunately, in these days it seems that even this is trying to be taken away. We know that many things pertaining to God have been and are persistently being taken away. This nation, even though, we do seem to have these times of turning towards and praising God, has always seemed to have had a hidden agenda behind these times of "worshipping God." Thanksgiving was always a time for the family to gather and catch up and just be with each other and enjoy the blessings in which God provides. However, that has been changing over the years.

Unfortunately, Thanksgiving for most of America has become simply another day off – a day off for a few. For the retail and computer sales community it has become a day to begin the Christmas season for selling gifts. For many others, it has simply become a day off with absolutely no references to giving true thanksgiving unto the Lord for what He has done and for what He has provided.

In other words it has lost its true meaning. I would not be surprised that very soon there will be a campaign to stop calling it “Thanksgiving” and just give it some other name – totally taking the concept of giving thanks unto the Lord out of the picture.

We might say this would happen because of certain people or certain organizations. However, the real culprit behind the stealing away of truly thanking God is most definitely satan and His forces of darkness. Originally, Thanksgiving was set aside as a day of truly thanking God for who He is and what He had given us a nation and as a people. If we take a true look at it, we see that business and other things have taken away from what Thanksgiving was truly meant to be. Unfortunately, the truth of the matter is that we must truly recognize that it has been, little by little, being stolen away by satan and the forces of darkness.

This may be true – for some. However, I believe, that there are those of us who still give thanks unto the Living God for who He is and all that He has done for us. There are those who do not only give thanks to the true God on only one day but rather, I believe, they give thanks unto Him every day in recognition of who He is and what He has done and IS STILL DOING!!!

We must never forget that God is God. God was, is and always will be there for those who truly acknowledge Him and who are called by His name. The scriptures declare that we are to offer unto the Lord our “sacrifice of thanksgiving.” It tells us this in Psalm 107:22 as it states, *“And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.”* Again, it tells us this in Psalm 116:17 as it states, *“I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.”*

The terms, “thanksgiving, thanks, and thankful” all come from the root Hebrew word, *“yadah.”* It means to express and make a confession of gratitude. It also means to have deep appreciation of someone or something and the acknowledgment of being pleased by having your desires and needs satisfied and met by that one. For the believer, it becomes an acknowledgement of God’s benefits and favor.

In this Hebrew word *“yadah,”* we also see that it expresses the idea of “shooting arrows into the air.” The actual physical expression of this for the worshipper is the extending of the hands. We “shoot our arrows” of not only praise but also “gratitude and thankfulness” unto the Lord. The “arrows” of thanksgiving and appreciation are to be aimed straight to the heart of our Abba, our Daddy God.

These “arrows” of love, adoration and thankfulness “pierce” His heart and they give Him a joy and a delight that floods His heart and truly “blesses” Him. That is why “thanksgiving” is such a powerful force. Psalm 100:4 tells us that with thanksgiving, we are able to enter into the “gates” of His presence. God delights in our giving Him “thanks.” So much so, that when we do, He brings us right into His presence. He allows us to experience His great joy as we bask in His glory - the glory of the Lord.

As we conclude, I would like to encourage **every true believer** to “give thanks with a grateful heart,” not just during this Thanksgiving season, but every day in the coming year(s). Especially during this Thanksgiving let us truly be “thankful” unto Him. Thank Him for our salvation. Thank Him for allowing us to be in a true relationship with Him, the one and only true Living God. Thank Him that you can now love Him because He first loved you. Truly, bless and thank the Lord with all your heart. If you are experiencing some rough times, offer up to the Lord your “sacrifice of thanksgiving.” Never forget that **“In all things give thanks for this IS the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”** (1Thessalonians 5:18)

From Trish and I, we would like to bless and wish you all a very, very blessed Thanksgiving.