

GIVE THANKS

In 1621, the Plymouth colonists and Wampanoag Indians shared an autumn harvest feast that is acknowledged today as one of the first Thanksgiving celebrations in the colonies. For more than two centuries, days of thanksgiving were celebrated by individual colonies and states. It wasn't until 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, that President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving Day to be held each November.

in 1789 George Washington issued the first Thanksgiving proclamation by the national government of the United States; in it, he called upon Americans to express their gratitude for the happy conclusion to the country's war of independence and the successful ratification of the U.S. Constitution. His successors John Adams and James Madison also designated days of thanks during their presidencies.

Abraham Lincoln in 1863, at the height of the Civil War, in a proclamation entreating all Americans to ask God to "commend to his tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife" and to "heal the wounds of the nation." He scheduled this day of "Thanksgiving" to be held every year on the final Thursday in November.

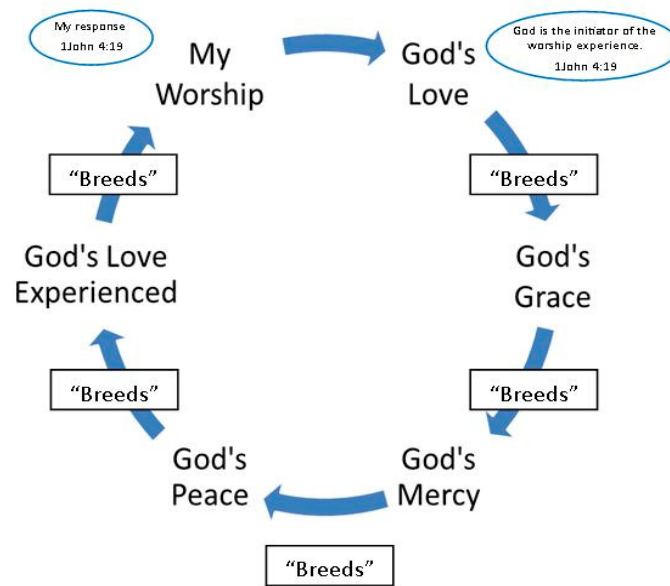
On Thanksgiving Day we are to gather family and friends together for the purpose of saying "thank you" to the Lord for all His blessings. When we hear the term "thanksgiving" our attention immediately turns to turkey, stuffing and gravy. "Thanksgiving" is truly an "American holiday" although other nations have picked up on it and have declared days of Thanksgiving for themselves. However, the idea of giving thanks unto our God originated, as we know, long before the Pilgrims and Abraham Lincoln.

From the very beginning of our Biblical history as found within the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament) we see men and women not just offering sacrifices of worship unto Yahweh but we read that they offered up to Him a "sacrifice of thanksgiving." Through these scriptures we as His children are to continue to offer unto Him these sacrifices of praise, worship and thanksgiving. As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving here in the United States, I would like to give some thoughts of what I believe the term of offering to God a "sacrifice of Thangsgiving" may involve. As we go forward, I would like to first turn our attention to Psalm 103. Even though it doesn't necessarily mention the term "thanks" or "thanksgiving" it is a good place to start.

The Psalm begins with, *"Bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is within me bless His holy name."* Then it proceeds to express all the things that God has done for His people. The writer then again expresses at the conclusion of the Psalm, *"Bless the Lord, O my soul."* This has always puzzled me. How can I "bless the Lord?" What can I "bless" Him with? He has everything. Isn't it supposed to be the other way around? We say things like, "God bless America, etc" Isn't it God who is supposed to do all the blessing to us? The question remains, "How can I bless God?"

The word "bless" comes from the Hebrew word *"barak."* It literally means to kneel and adore. So how does this apply to God "blessing" His people? Is He "kneeling down" in worship to us? Obviously not. When God pours out His blessings upon us and "blesses" His people, He is literally expressing His adoration to us as His children. He literally adores us. He delights in us as a father delights in his little child. God is literally, "kneeling down" to us, not in submission or obeisance, but rather as a loving Father who would bend and kneel down to bestow wonderful things onto His children. As He pours out His love to His children, what else can we do but fall on our knees and pour the love that He gave to us right back unto Him. 1John 4:19 tells us, *"We love him, because he first loved us."* I call this the "Cycle of Worship."

The Cycle of Worship



- God is love (He loves His creation unconditionally – “agape” love. He initiates the worship experience)
- God's love "breeds" God's grace (His unearned favor towards us)
- God's grace "breeds" God's mercy (He saw our need for salvation and did something to meet the need – He sent Jesus)
- God's grace and mercy "breeds" God's peace (reconciliation back to Him through Jesus)
- God's grace + mercy + peace = God's love experienced (We experience God’s love through salvation and all that that encompasses)
- God's love experienced breeds our worship unto Him (We experience God’s love so now we can love Him. That is what worship is all about. He first loved us so now we can love Him - 1John 4:19)

THE “SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING”

*"And let them sacrifice the **sacrifices of thanksgiving**, and declare his works with rejoicing."* - Psalms 107:22

*"I will offer to thee the **sacrifice of thanksgiving**, and will call upon the name of the LORD."* - Psalm 116:17

As we mentioned previously, when God pours out all that He is to us what else can we do but get down on our knees, adore and thank Him with our “sacrifice of thanksgiving” and “Bless the heart of our King.” Its so simple isn’t it? That's why I call it Simply simple, worship...

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. It is the acknowledgement of benefits and favor.

In this Hebrew word “*yadah*,” it also 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. These "arrows" of love, adoration and thankfulness "pierce" His heart and gives him a joy and a delight that floods his heart and

“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 this so much that He brings us into His presence and allows us to experience great joy as we bask in the glory of the Lord. Its all because of a heart of gratitude and thanksgiving.

So why then is it called, the “sacrifice of thanksgiving?” We must remember what the concept of “sacrifice” entails. It is the total dying and putting away of self. The "sacrifice" aspect comes in because many times we fail to recognize where our blessings come from. It becomes all about me and what “I” did. Oh yeah, God may have been with me but after all “I allowed” God to do it through me. Oh boy. Step away. With thoughts like that, lightning may not be too far away. Ingratitude start to creep in. We begin take things for granted as if they were owed to us. Pride begins to enter the picture. This can become very dangerous. We should always "put our flesh under our feet" and be thankful unto God for it is He who is truly our source of life - not you, I or anyone else.

Another thought concerning this aspect of it being a “sacrifice” is found in 1Thessalonians 5:18 where it states, *“In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”* Of course everyone says, “How can I do this when stuff is flying at me from all over.” Well, the scripture is very clear. It is not saying to give thanks *for* the stuff flying at you from every which way, but rather it states that *“...in everything.”* Aha!!! Yes, when everything is flying at you from every which way but loose, that is the time when the “sacrifice” kicks in. You don’t feel like it nor do you want to bless the Lord at that time. How can I? It would be illogical to do that.

However, if we really believe that God is in control of everything and knows the end even before it begins, then He knows about what I am going through and He knows that I’m going to make it through. Sound familiar? simply put - God is a Sovereign God. So now I offer up the “sacrifice of joy” knowing that I win and I am going to make it, as well as I offer up a “sacrifice of thanksgiving” knowing that God will supply for the need in the way He knows is best for me. I choose to trust Him, totally. I am seeing it in advance just as God sees it and thanking Him for it in the “now” as if it has already been delivered. Ergo, we do two “sacrifices” for the price of one. What a bargain!!! Now, isn’t that simple?

Many times we run out of ways of saying, "Thank you God." However, as we just discussed, the sacrifice of thanksgiving is also expressing and proclaiming boldly who and what God is. I encourage you to make a list of who and what God is so that in your times of offering up your "sacrifice of thanksgiving" you can truly thank God for who and what He is.

The following is a brief list to start you off:

Yahweh - Elohim (Genesis 1:1; 3:8-15) - *"Lord God;"*

Yahweh-Yireh (Genesis 22:13-14) - *"The Lord will provide;"*

El Shaddai (Genesis 17:1-4) – *"The God who is more than enough;"*

Yahweh -Nissi (Exodus 17:8-15) *"The Lord is my Banner (flag);"*

Yahweh -Shalom (Judges 6:24) - *"The Lord is our Peace;"*

Yahweh -Tsidkenu (Jeremiah 23:6) *"The Lord our Righteousness;"*

Yahweh -Shammah (Ezekiel 48:35) - *"The Lord is Present;"*

Yahweh -Rapha (Exodus 15:26) - *"The Lord who heals thee."*

Below are some scripture references for you to study concerning the “Sacrifice of Thanksgiving.

Psalm 103:2-5 - *Bless the Lord for all his benefits and for what he has done in our lives.*

Philippians 4:6 - *Our prayers must be lifted up and brought before God along with our decree of faith through thanksgiving, thanking God for answering our prayers.*

2Corinthians 9:12 - *The people were giving to the poor and Paul is saying that as we are giving willingly to others, it expresses our thanksgiving to God for what He has given us so that now we can have abundance to give to others.*

As we conclude our discussion, I would like to encourage you to "give thanks with a grateful heart" this Thanksgiving season. Thank Him for your salvation. Thank Him for your relationship with the one and only true God. Thank Him that you can now love Him because He first loved you. Bless 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."

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