

A READING FROM DEUTERONOMY 8:7-18

The LORD your God is bringing you into a good land - a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron, and you can dig copper out of the hills. When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

SERMON: "Thanks Living"

O Lord, we pray, speak in the calming of our minds and in the longings of our hearts, by the words of my lips and in the thoughts that we form. Speak, O Lord, for your servants listen. Amen.

***Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name; make known among the nations what He has done. Bring an offering and come before Him.
Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever."
(IChronicles16:8,29,34)***

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ (I Thessalonians 5:18)

After you eat and are full, give praise to the Lord your God for the good land He gave you. Make sure that you never forget he Lord or disobey His laws and teachings that I am giving you this day.

(Deuteronomy 8:10-11)

This weekend many people all across Canada will celebrate Thanksgiving. They will be particularly mindful of the harvest. Churches will be decorated with squash and pumpkins, multi-coloured leaves, corn, grapevines and other produce including jars of all the good stuff like pickles, jams and jellies.

We will not all be able to get together and sit down to bounteous feasts of turkey with all the trimmings, with apple cider and pumpkin pie because of the restrictions from this Covid Pandemic. We will reward ourselves, those of us who can, with the bounties and fruits of the harvest. We will even remember those less fortunate than ourselves. We will hold dinners at shelters and soup kitchens, and we will have given a little extra to the food banks. And we will be satisfied. And that's good, but it also might be bad.

It's good because it is right that we should feast and thank God for what he has given us; it is right to celebrate and to share the bounty of the earth and sea; it's good to express appreciation and to rejoice over the goodness of God.

But it also might be bad, depending on our overall attitude and approach to life and to what God has done for us and continues doing for us.

Some of you might remember the old Ma and Pa Kettle television series?

In a classic scene that was to be found in many of the episodes, Ma Kettle would bang the triangle on the porch, and from every corner and crevice around the yard hordes of screaming, yelling children would pour into the house fighting for a place at the table. Then Ma, in her best stern tones would holler, "Hold it!" and everyone would freeze in silence. Pa Kettle would roll his eyes heavenward, tip his hat, and say, "Much obliged." And immediately the melee began as abruptly as it had stopped.

God calls us to much better, my friends, than a tip of the hat.

God calls us not only to a day of thanksgiving, as He has called His people from the time of Moses

He calls us to a life of thanks-living.

For me, the difference between thanksgiving and thanks-living is between giving thanks on one day and living thanks always. Thanksgiving is a terminal event.

Thanks living is a way of life.

Giving thanks is important.

When we give thanks as a community, as a family, we are reminded of all the good things and all the good people that we have been given or gifted with.

We remember that we have been blessed. We remember that there is a greater good than ourselves, if only for a moment or a day.

But the temptation is to then return to our self-sufficiency, to forget God, to say to ourselves, "my strength and my ability have gotten me thus far in life", and then to yearn for more, and to expect it as if it were our right and our privilege.

We see it in our children. They are ever so grateful, momentarily, when we've gifted them. But how quickly they forget their thankfulness.

Are we so different than our children?

Don't we always want more or better or newer or stronger?

That's the impression one can get watching the TV ads. We fill our lives with things only to find out that there is no filling.

This is where thanks-living comes into the picture. We begin to "live thanks" when we open our lives up to God and give God the first place.

As we do this; as we humble ourselves before God and acknowledge that He is the source of good things, our awareness of our blessings increases, our joy becomes fuller, and we find ourselves in an attitude and state of grace.

Like Abraham and Sarah, we discover we have been blessed to be a blessing.

Our continual thankfulness for our blessings will turn into a lifetime of living thanks, of living the blessings and sharing the blessings because we know in the deepest parts of our hearts that God is the giver of it all.

This morning as we close with the benediction I will say "In the power of the Holy Spirit, we now go forth into the world to fulfill our calling as the people of God, the Body of Christ."

It would be a very short step to add, "blessed to be a blessing, and living in thanks for the life we have received."

As you give thanks this Thanksgiving Day, remember your calling to be joyful always, to pray continually, and to give thanks in all circumstances. It is what God wants of you and for you. In it you will find the fullness of what God has in store for you.

Blessed be God's name, day by day. Amen

Let us pray.

O Lord, maker of all things, You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living creature. We thank You for crowning the fields with Your blessings and helping us once more to gather in the fruits of the earth.

Loving God, You provide for our needs from the abundance of Your grace.

You fill your people with good things. We thank You God for the food we eat, for the home we have, for the family we belong to, for the church we are a part of, and for the community that we live in. Lord, help us remember all our blessings and to praise You for them all.

Redeeming and loving God, You give us much. Help us to give as You give and to share as You share; to give joy and hope to those have sadness and despair; to give

food and drink to those who hunger and thirst; to give justice and mercy to those who cry out for both; and to give truth to those who have been deceived and love to those who are lost. Father, we pray that we might always live thanks and so bring praise and glory to your name through Jesus Christ our Lord.

REQUESTS

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

BENEDICTION

In the power of the Holy Spirit we now go forth into the world, to fulfil our calling as the people of God, the body of Christ. May we be "blessed to be a blessing and live in thanks for the life we have received."

Go in peace, love and care for one another in the name of Christ and may God lead you in righteousness and bestow upon you the spirit of thanks living, that you may please Him in word and in deed all the days of your life and know the joy that He brings to humble hearts.

Amen