

Thoughts on Thanksgiving

I woke this morning with the thought that thankfulness is a byproduct, not something we put on like a coat. Likewise, counting our blessings cannot be done without looking at what we could have suffered. We cannot be thankful for a good crop without knowing that we could have had a crop failure. We cannot be thankful for God's saving grace, without considering where we would be without it. We cannot decide that now I am going to be thankful and expect a revolutionary heart change.

Thankfulness, and thanksgiving are conditions of the heart. Thankfulness cannot come without a realization of what could have been, or what could have happened. As a small child we are oblivious to the things around us. It is only as we grow older and become aware of choices that we can even be able to understand thankfulness. Therefore, thankfulness is not possible without a measure of understanding.

Though it does us good to count our blessings, true thankfulness is a result of the realization that we are undeserving of what we have received. The true spirit of it is not something we can manufacture or put on. As soon as we feel like we deserve something, thankfulness flees.

The Pilgrims chose to set aside a time of thanksgiving and feasting, because they realized that without what they had received from God, they would have perished. Therefore, true thankfulness is built on the understanding of what we were saved from. Obviously, this takes a mind and heart with vision.

If a man simply lives from day to day, without perception of his vulnerability, taking life and his surroundings for granted, he will have little thankfulness. If a man always has good things, and everything his heart could wish for, he will have no reason to be thankful. Those who have everything one could wish for, and retain it for themselves, are not the happiest people in the world. They can be full of earthly goods, yet empty of heart and soul. We could say that true thanksgiving is formed from the struggle of life. It takes the negative and unhappy things of life to create thankfulness.

In Christian life we are thankful when the Lord saves us from our sins. It is the Lord's goodness who offers us a life of peace and happiness. When the Lord washes our hearts, we become joyful, happy, and free. It is this goodness from the Lord from which unworthiness and thankfulness leap forth becoming the song of our heart. In this way, thankfulness is an attribute of Christian life. A true Christian should naturally be a thankful person.

When the Lord delivered the Israelites from their enemies, they sang songs of praise and thanksgiving. In many cases the odds were against them; it was obvious that the Lord was their deliverer. In like manner we as Christians are also up against impossible odds. On our own, it is impossible for us to live for the Lord and conquer the enemy of our soul. God has made a way for us, by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who paid the sacrifice for our sins. He has already conquered Satan. Our battle is not a direct battle against Satan, but a battle to bring our will into subjection to God. This is also not possible without receiving strength from the Lord. It is not possible in a spiritual sense to put our flesh to death. We can try, and many do, but it is futile to attempt to crucify ourselves spiritually. This is because there is no part of our flesh that can save us. This salvation of our soul is a gift, which cannot be paid for or earned. To be able to do so, would taint our sacrifice with our own works, which would render it unacceptable to a pure, righteous, and Holy God. No part of our flesh can be involved in the saving of our souls. When we come to that realization, and God does that full work of redemption in our hearts, we will be thankful. That thankfulness and unworthiness cannot be concealed nor contained; it will flow out to those around us. It is by taking time to consider what could have been, or what we have been saved from, which spawns true thanksgiving.

Years ago, my mother had a motto beside the kitchen sink which read: "Thank God for dirty dishes, they have a tale to tell, while others may go hungry, we're eating very well." Many times, all we must do is to look at the fruit of our lives to realize we have many things to be thankful for.

Psalms 95:1-3 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.

The Unlikely Writer

Jeff Goertzen

11/23/2023