

Thanksgiving To God; Revelation 7:9-12

I. Thanksgiving

- A. The beginning of thanksgiving comes from a harvest feast held by the surviving members of the Mayflower with the local indian tribes from the Wampanoag Confederacy
- B. The pilgrims first winter was devastating, claiming half of their number
- C. Squanto, a local indian who had learned English taught them maize cultivation
- D. There was a feast the following harvest
- E. After that, different colonies would (or would not) celebrate harvest at different times
- F. In 1863, in the middle of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln created the national holiday on the last Thursday of November
- G. This might have been done to honor the Mayflower which anchored at Cape Cod on November 21, 1620
- H. It was further refined by Franklin Roosevelt to be held in the 4th Thursday of November
- I. There are two contemporary accounts of the 1621 Thanksgiving:
 1. First is Edward Winslow's account, which he wrote in a letter dated December 12, 1621. The complete letter was first published in 1622. "Our corn [i.e. wheat] did prove well, and God be praised, we had a good increase of Indian corn, and our barley indifferent good, but our peas not worth the gathering, for we feared they were too late sown. They came up very well, and blossomed, but the sun parched them in the blossom. Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the **goodness of God**, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."
 2. The second description was written about twenty years after the fact by William Bradford in his History Of Plymouth Plantation. Bradford's History was rediscovered in 1854 after having been taken by British looters during the Revolutionary War. Its discovery prompted a greater American interest in the history of the Pilgrims. It is also in this account that the Thanksgiving turkey tradition is founded. "They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercising in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides they had about a peck of meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to that proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports."

II. Times of Plenty

A. Sometimes it is so easy to forget where our blessings come from

B. James 1:12–18; 12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. 18 Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

1. God has given us all that we have

2. We should not look at anything as our own, but as on loan from God and to be used in His service

3. And even then it is hard to be content

4. 1 Timothy 6:3–10; 3 If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, 5 and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain, 7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

C. When The Israelites leave Egypt

1. God gives them Manna and one night of quail (Exodus 16:13-18)

2. The Israelites were not content with that; they get tired of eating Manna

3. Numbers 11:4–6; 4 Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, “Oh that we had meat to eat! 5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. 6 But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.”

4. Numbers 11:31–32; 31 Then a wind from the Lord sprang up, and it brought quail from the sea and let them fall beside the camp, about a day’s journey on this side and a day’s journey on the other side, around the camp, and about two cubits above the ground. 32 And the people rose all that day and all night and all the next day, and gathered the quail. Those who gathered least gathered ten homers. And they spread them out for themselves all around the camp.

5. 1 Homer is about 5.8 gallons, so 10 homers is 58 gallons of quail meat! (a 50 gallon drum comes to my mind)

6. And that is the least that was gathered!

D. We must understand that God is taking care of us and will continue to do so

E. He has given us what we need and will continue to do so

F. We must be content with what God has given us

III. Times of Want

- A. We can be so focused on our want (need) that we forget to give God thanks for what He has blessed us with
- B. Suffering is a blessing
- C. 1 Peter 3:13–17; 13 Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, 16 having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.
- D. Does that bring new meaning to the song Count Your Blessings?
- E. When we focus on ourselves, it is hard to thank God when the cupboards are bare
 - 1. I am convinced that we (as a society) have become consumers and not producers
 - 2. We consume all of God's blessings and never produce any fruit
 - 3. Philippians 4:10–13; 10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. 11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
 - 4. 1 Corinthians 9:1–6; 1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? 2 If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. 3 This is my defense to those who would examine me. 4 Do we not have the right to eat and drink? 5 Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? 6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?
 - 5. 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18; 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
- F. "This is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."
 - 1. Rejoice
 - 2. Pray
 - 3. Give thanks (thanksgiving)

IV. Thanksgiving

- A. It is not just some holiday (holy day) that we eat turkey and watch football
- B. It should be an everyday occurrence in our lives
- C. If we have much
- D. Or if we have little