

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

# Where Did Thanksgiving Come From?

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Colossians 3:15-17

**1 Where did Thanksgiving come from? How can I express gratitude in a way in which God would be pleased? How did the holiday of Thanksgiving develop in the United States? 2**

**Governor William Bradford of Massachusetts made the first Thanksgiving proclamation three years after the Pilgrims settled at Plymouth. It says, "Inasmuch as the great Father has given us this year an abundant harvest of Indian corn, wheat, peas, beans squashes and garden vegetables; and has made the forest to abound with game and the sea with fish and clams; and inasmuch as He has protected us from the ravages of the savages, spared us from pestilence and disease and has granted us freedom to worship God according to the dictates of our conscience. 3 Now, I, your magistrate, do proclaim that all you Pilgrims, with your wives and your little ones, do gather at your meeting house on your hill between the hours of 9 and 12 in the day time on Thursday, November 29<sup>th</sup> of the year of our Lord one thousand**

**six hundred and twenty three and the third year since you landed on Pilgrim Rock, there to listen to your pastor and render thanksgiving to Almighty God for all His blessings.” – William Bradford (Governor of the Colony) <sup>4</sup>**

**President George Washington made the first Thanksgiving Proclamation to our newly formed country. He stated, “WHEREAS, it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits and humbly to implore His protection and favor; WHEREAS, both the houses of Congress have, by their joint committee, requested me ‘to recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness’! <sup>5</sup> Now, therefore, I do recommend next, to be devoted by the**

**people of the states to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be, that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country.” – George Washington.**

**The federal holiday of Thanksgiving Day might not be celebrated in our country today were it not for a very persistent woman named Sarah Hale. Up to this time Thanksgiving Day was celebrated by some of the individual states at times they chose. But in 1828, Mrs. Hale, the editor of a popular national magazine and the author of the poem “Mary Had a Little Lamb”, began campaigning for the restoration of Thanksgiving as a national holiday.**

**She wrote letters to national leaders from the President on down, to no avail. She was politely refused and was told it was impossible or impractical.**

**Finally, in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln listened to her plea that North and South “lay aside enmities and**

strife on Thanksgiving Day”. He proclaimed the fourth Thursday of November to be the official “National Thanksgiving Day”. This day was ratified by Congress in 1941.

Actually the idea of Thanksgiving came from the Bible. <sup>6</sup> From Colossians, chapter 3, verses 15-17, we read, **Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.** <sup>7</sup>

There are . . .

# **I. Examples of Thanksgiving Expressed in the Old Testament**

**Examples of Thanksgiving expressed in the Old Testament. <sup>8</sup>**

**They were called Fellowship Offerings which could be made as offerings of thanksgiving or Peace Offerings.**

**<sup>1</sup> <sup>9</sup> These offerings were offered spontaneously whenever someone wanted to express gratitude to the Lord. <sup>10</sup> The offering consisted of an animal whose blood had been drained and whose body fat was burnt on the altar. <sup>11</sup> These offerings, along with unleavened cakes, were to be eaten by the priests that day. <sup>12</sup>**

**Then, there were . . .**

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**<sup>1</sup> Leviticus 3:1-17 & 7:12-15.**

## II. Examples of Thanksgiving Expressed in the New Testament

Examples of thanksgiving expressed in the New Testament. <sup>13</sup>

For instance, there was the paralyzed man who was carried by his four friends. They climbed to the top of the roof of the building where the Lord was preaching, chiseled a whole in the ceiling and lowered their friend into the room where Jesus was. After he was healed **immediately, he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.** <sup>2</sup> <sup>14</sup>

Then, there were the demons in the pigs story. A demon possessed man approached the Lord and Jesus cast the demons into a herd of pigs. After this man was healed, he went and told everyone what the Lord had done. <sup>3</sup> <sup>15</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 5:25.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 8:38-39 - The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return home and tell how much

When Jesus was preaching in a synagogue a woman with palsy walked in. **Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.** <sup>4</sup> <sub>16</sub>

Blind Bartimaeus was begging by the side of the road from Jericho when Jesus passed by. The Lord healed his sight, and the man expressed his gratitude by following Jesus. <sup>5</sup> <sub>17</sub>

So . . .

### **III. When is It Appropriate to Thank the Lord?**

When is it appropriate for you to thank the Lord? <sub>18</sub>

Before eating food. <sub>19</sub> There are Bible examples of this.

When the Lord fed 5000 men plus women and children with just five loaves and two fish, **Taking the five**

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God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 13:13.

<sup>5</sup> Mark 10:52 - Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.



loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them.<sup>6</sup> 20

At the Last Supper, he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them.<sup>7</sup> 21

The Apostle Paul just before the shipwreck. After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves.<sup>8</sup> 22

How about saying grace in public? My family has always said grace before we ate in restaurants as a matter of course. One of us prays in a low voice so only our family and the Lord needs to hear. We are comfortable with that procedure. 23

But we do use discretion. For several years I was a member of our city's Chamber of Commerce. Every week I would have lunch with about twenty other

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<sup>6</sup> Luke 9:16.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 26:27-28.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 27:35-36.

business professionals. When our meals were served, I discreetly bowed my head for a couple of seconds of silent prayer out of respect for my non-believing friends. They knew what I was doing. The Lord was honored, and nobody was offended. Discrete prayer in public is a good Christian witness if done appropriately; not in a “holier than thou” fashion. <sup>24</sup>

God’s Word says it is appropriate to thank the Lord in all circumstances; good or bad. First Thessalonians, chapter 5, verse 16 through 18, **Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.** <sup>25</sup>

Again in Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 16, **I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.**

It’s tough giving thanks when terrible things are happening, and you wonder if God really cares. Believe me, He does! But He does allow trials to shape and mold our character.

Years ago my friend Bill had to move out of his house because he couldn't pay the rent. His wife, falsely accused of fraud by her company, was now unemployed waiting for her trial. They didn't know where they were going to live. We had a meal for them, and Bill led us in the most beautiful prayer of thanksgiving for what his family did have. Faith in the Lord's provisions were never questioned! It was one of my "wow" moments! <sup>26</sup>

#### **IV. What are Some Things You Can Thank God For?**

What are some things you can thank God for? Scriptures help us here. <sup>27</sup>

You can thank God for satisfying your personal needs. Romans, chapter 14, verse 6, **He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.** <sup>28</sup>

You can thank God for delivering you from your sinful lifestyle. Romans, chapter 7, verses 23 through 25, . . . but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord! <sup>29</sup>

You can thank God for giving us the Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> <sub>30</sub>

You can thank God for giving you victory over death! The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>10</sup> <sub>31</sub>

You can thank the Lord for other people who have accepted the Word of God. Notice in each of the following scripture the gratitude expressed:

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from

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<sup>9</sup> II Corinthians 9:15 - Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

<sup>10</sup> I Corinthians 15:56-57.

us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. <sup>11</sup> <sub>32</sub>

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. <sup>12</sup> <sub>33</sub>

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. <sup>13</sup> <sub>34</sub>

You can thank God for the faith and love you see in the body of Christ, His church. We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love

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<sup>11</sup> I Thessalonians 2:13.

<sup>12</sup> II Corinthians 2:14.

<sup>13</sup> Romans 6:17-18.

**every one of you has for each other is increasing.** <sup>14</sup> <sub>35</sub>

The Lord is disappointed when you take His grace for granted! Ten men approached the Lord one day begging for Him to heal them. He took compassion for them, healing them all. When they realized they were cured they left; all except one who returned to say thanks. <sup>36</sup> Notice the Lord's response to this, **“Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”** Then he said to him, **“Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”** <sup>15</sup> <sub>37</sub>

Lord Jesus suffered and died on the cross for you. He loves you that much! Express your gratitude to Him by surrendering your life to Him today!

**<http://biblelifemessages.org/>**

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<sup>14</sup> II Thessalonians 1:3.

<sup>15</sup> Luke 17:15-19.