

October 2007

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The Power of Thanksgiving

Elder Charles Moore

Thanksgiving is a special time of the year. It is a time when we look back on the blessings God has given us, and a time when we look forward to the blessings we will enjoy in eternity. But Thanksgiving, the day, reminds us of thanksgiving, the attitude. What we need to cultivate is an attitude of gratitude. The reason is simple. We live in a day of ingratitude. Aristotle recognized this when he said, "What soon grows old? Gratitude."

It's never too early or too late to celebrate "thanks giving." Moment by moment we can discover new reasons to be thankful. Unfortunately, many just scratch the surface when it comes to giving thanks. Let's do more than that and take a look at the whys and wherefores of giving thanks as well as some practical expressions of giving thanks.

Why Give Thanks? The most obvious reason and the reason given most often used in the OT are "**Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; For His loving kindness is everlasting.**" (Psalms 107:1)

Have you ever thought of God as being **good**. God is good to us even when we are not good to God and His **loving kindness** endures or even the best of us would be just a grease spot on the road of life. We need to remember this every day and one way is to rehearse what God has done for us and King David gives us

a great example, "**Then on that day David first assigned Asaph and his relatives to give thanks to the Lord. 'Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples. Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; Speak of all His wonders. 10 Glory in His holy name; Let the heart of those who seek the Lord be glad. Seek the Lord and His strength; Seek His face continually. Remember His wonderful deeds which He has done, His marvels and the judgments from His mouth,'"** (IChronicles 16: 7-12)

Remembering what God has done is a great reason to worship and give thanks. Another reason, almost as obvious as the first is that God wants us to give thanks: "**Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**" (1Thessalonians 5:16-18). God's will for you is that you would rejoice always, pray continually and to be grateful at all times and in every circumstance. The fact that God deserves our thanks because of who He is and what He has done combined with the fact that it is His will for us to give thanks add up to a third

reason for giving thanks—we owe it to God.

Everything in the universe belongs to God, so when we give thanks we are merely acknowledging what is due to Him but our sin-diseased world exalts the "I deserve" concept. That self-centered, me-first attitude comes naturally to us all and like many unhealthy attitudes, it is daily fed and reinforced by consumer-oriented enterprises and self-centered sales pitches.

Thankfulness and praise to God run contrary to the "I deserve" attitude that pervades our society. The opposite of self-indulgence is self-sacrifice. Real thanksgiving takes us out of our comfort zone and involves sacrifice: **Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. (Hebrews 13:15)**. Thanksgiving helps us see beyond the cloud of our own culture, past the limitations of our own vision, to the brightness of the One who is all true, all powerful, all giving and worthy of all praise.

When we focus on what God deserves and what we owe Him, our lives are much more satisfying. That's because God created us to enjoy Him and to reflect His glory. The fact that the Creator of the Universe desires our thanks and our praise means that we are important to Him. That is a staggering reality. So we should give thanks to God because He deserves it, because He wills it and because we owe it to Him.

When Should We Give Thanks? The easiest and most

(Continued on page 2)

natural way to give thanks to God is in response to a situation. We thank God for the biopsy that comes back negative or the car accident that was narrowly averted. We thank God for the birth of a child or for the salvation of a loved one. It is right to respond to such circumstances with thanksgiving, but that only scratches the surface.

Thankfulness is a virtue that flows from an awareness of God's goodness. That virtue is more than a response to situations; it is a way of life. The answer to when we should give thanks is simple—always! But in order to do that, we cannot remain passive. We've got to take time to reflect, to be proactive in our awareness of God's goodness. We've got to pray for and pursue thankfulness with diligence because gratitude doesn't come naturally.

The Benefits of Giving Thanks There are over 550 references to thankfulness in the Bible. With such an emphasis on thanksgiving, there must be great benefits as well. Consider the benefits of cultivating this attitude of gratitude. The greatest is that thanksgiving has a powerful effect on our lives. It *changes* us.

Thanksgiving makes *us* different. Look around you. Daily you will see people who are bitter. It is said that "some people are bitter, not because they do not have anything, but because they do not have everything." We have been well taught to be greedy and grasping. We are bombarded by commercials which remind us of what we do not have. We are led to believe that if we do not have *things* we will not experience happiness. And so we are unhappy people. Most unhappy people are unthankful people. At first glance, you may think them unthankful because they are unhappy, but the opposite is true, they are unhappy because they are unthankful. Thanksgiving has the power to transform us into different people. Thanksgiving crowds out cynicism, self-pity and fear. Thanksgiving suffocates jealousy and backbiting. None of these can survive in a heart filled with gratitude.

There are so many reasons to be thankful. We can be thankful most of all for the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ; for the promises of God, which are all yes in Christ; for the blessings of life which God gives us; for what thanksgiving does for us inwardly, replacing hatred, bitterness, unforgiveness, and envy; and for what thanksgiving does for us outwardly, making us a pleasure to be around. But while there are many reasons to be thankful, perhaps there is one reason which rises above them all. Thanksgiving is really the only thing we have to give to God. When you think of it, all the other material things are things we have been given. But our thanksgiving is ours. It is uniquely ours. It is something we choose to do. It is an offering of praise to God. It is something that gladdens His heart. May we always be found thanking God?

WE WISH YOU A BLESSED
THANKSGIVING

The month began in a type of time warp, with temperatures in the warm 70's and staying warmer than usual all month. It made for a great beginning for the Fall retreat and many a conversation was held in the church parking lot, as though people were reluctant to let the days go by unnoticed. Fall retreat was kicked off on Friday night with a 'religious knowledge' quiz put together and shown on the Big Screen by Tim Begeman. There were questions ranging from theology to technical religious terms to Bible characters. Candy was the prize and shared with all. Impressive, the young students of the church showed they really *HAVE* been listening and understand some heavy doctrines like righteousness. We loved having outlying members like Deborah and Jim Stoner, Dorothy Layton, and Sonya Pease join us. Saturday evening we got together and watched old movies (Seven Brides for Seven Brothers) and new ones (Facing the Giants) that involved a lot of audience participation.

Fall Retreat always kicks off our year-round Wednesday night Bible study. This year, we have decided to take the studies on the road, to various members' homes. We're continuing to study the Old Testament themes this year. Adult Bible Studies have been taught upstairs by Geneva who has been visibly shaken by her topic – Revelation. It's one she's teaching very ably and with neat handouts. We've had a lot of joy, sharing the knowledge that we don't understand everything Revelation means, but we sure can know we are safe because of the Lamb.

Nate Valentine had a great trip to Renfro Valley this month with son, Joel, and friends. They had good weather, good music and safe travel. Later in the month, a large contingent from our church got to go with him to a Faith In Action fundraiser, theme, a Little Bit Country. A long-standing, note that I did not say 'old', friend, Vicki Velasco was able to visit with us at the dinner. Towards the tail end of the month, several members also went to Toledo to see a Mark Lowery program: Dale and Geneva Begeman, Terrie Fedor, Jean Lane, and Jeanette Ault. It was a great program with a great theme, 'Let Me be the Miracle'.

Bosco Moore's entire nursing home facility up and moved from a very old and institutional facility to a state of the art, homey and beautiful facility just north of Monroe. He has his own phone and room now. Tim and Diane Begeman got to travel to Phoenix with Jean Lane. Jean says they took very good care of her on the trip. Jean will stay with Jon and Berty, but Diane and Tim had a welcome visit with Kane and Jennie Begeman.

Jenna Boyd's new baby girl, Hailey, visited church, brought and loved by friends Chelsey and Jordan. Now that school is back in swing for our students, our younger church members have a full schedule of wonderful things to do for the year. Gabe Vargas is busy as is his sister Riley on the school basketball team, Riley has been inducted into the Brownies, and David Begeman has been undefeated on his hockey team, the Ice Hawks, which dad Brian is coaching. Go athletes. Joe Smeltzer continues to coach runners and keep his own youthful appearance up and Elisha Brugman has been long-distance teaching Gramma and Poppa Moo (Rene and Charlie Moore) to play an interactive video game.

Jamie Vargas has been having a great month. One nice thing that happened, besides simply enjoying the love of God, is that she had to put together a program for her work and her boss was very happy. Seth Begeman has a great job doing what he loves at Wildwood Metro Park in Toledo. They have a ton of things to do there, ranging from trail hikes to programs for children to history presentations. All those nature classes at camp paid off (and so does getting a degree in recreation and leisure sciences). Check out the park web page <http://www.metroparkstoledo.com/metroparks/programs>.

Several of our members and friends need special prayers this month. James Goins has moved into a neurological rehab facility called Special Tree in Romulus Michigan. This will be the first time since his accident in August that he will be having any rehabilitative therapy. Marcia Moore has been having a flare-up of breathing problems and Laurie Eckles has developed painful rheumatoid arthritis in her wrists and other joints. Tom Chuhran has acute leukemia and he and his family need our prayers.

It's hard to believe but Christmas is coming and the planners amongst us must begin planning. With that in mind, Melinda (who found her temporarily lost copy of You Can't Curl Your Hair with Holy Rollers) read a great cautionary tale about not using live animals for Christmas plays. We've had a lot of fun hearing her stories and when her turn is over, whoever follows will be looking for new story sources!

That's all the news for this month. Until next month, may you be with God and He with you – every day and in every way.

Cyberspace News genevabegeman@charter.net

The month of October was a beautiful time of super weather and activities. We had summer all month and our retreat was especially blessed with great weather!

The church fall retreat is the first weekend of October so we will start there. Driving in from Maryland were the Stoners and Dorothy Layton. Before the retreat business meeting on Friday we meet for lunch. We were very happy to meet our visitors at the restaurant. In the evening just before supper at church Sonya Pease from New York always arrives. She had had a good trip with a little stop for quilt shopping on the way. She is always faithful to come that long trip and we really appreciate her presence!

We had great worship services and a fellowship time Saturday evening with a movie and snacks. We were sad to see our guests leave on Sunday as the weekend flew by.

One special note--Sonya brought Laurie Eckles a hand made quilt that contained breast fighting cancer materials that she had labored to make. It was beautifully done, but Laurie was unable to come to church because she was not well. Sonya left the quilt with us and we were able to give the gift to her on Monday when Laurie came out to visit her mom Judy with Rachel Sottile. It was greatly appreciated, Sonya. Laurie was happy later in the month when she had a diagnosis so she can be treated. She has rheumatoid arthritis and is currently being treated and is much improved.

Ruth and David Charles celebrated 60 years together this month. They are planning a cruise at the end of November to celebrate. Ruth has been taking some tests for various problems and so far has not had any diagnosis. We wish you both the best, David and Ruth!

Kane and Jennie Begeman were so happy to have Dad and Mom Begeman visit them briefly in Phoenix. Tim and Diane reported good weather and a great time! They escorted Jean Lane for one of her visits to son, Jon, and daughter-in-law Berty's. Jean is always so happy to see her grandchildren SheaLyn and Scott also.

Carrie and Joel DeHaan are getting along fine in Lansing these days. Carrie is busy attending medical school and Joel was working. After a brief lay-off, Joel found new employment but will have to travel a lot. (He's an apprentice electrician.) Hope this new job works great for you, Joel.

Kerry & Kathleen are proud to announce that their daughter, Leanne, is now officially Dr. Johnson. On Thursday, October 25 she successfully defended her thesis before a large audience at the University of Pennsylvania. Her parents, fiancé, and Jons' parents were in attendance. Afterwards, there was a reception in her honor. Leanne is currently interviewing for a postdoctoral research position in New York City.

One fellow was violently tearing through his Bible in a desperate search when a friend came up and asked, "Is something wrong?"

"Yes," he said, "I can't remember if the Thanksgiving story is in the Old Testament or New Testament!"

**CHURCH OF THE
LORD OUR
RIGHTEOUSNESS**

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I Am Thankful.....

...for the taxes that I pay because it means that I am employed.

...for the mess to clean after a party because it means I have been surrounded by friends.

...for the clothes that fit a little too snug because it means I have enough to eat.

...for my shadow who watches me work because it means I am out in the sunshine.

...for a lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning and gutters that need fixing because it means I have a home.

...for all the complaining I hear about the government because it means we have freedom of speech.

...for the spot I find at the far end of the parking lot because it means I am capable of walking.

...for the lady behind me in church who sings off key because it means that I can hear.

...for the piles of laundry and ironing because it means I have clothes to wear.

...for weariness and aching muscles at the end of the day because it means I have been productive.

...for the alarm that goes off in the early morning hours because it means that I am alive.