

Alleluia

Dove

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There is More to Thanksgiving



By Bob Garrett for the Elders

Editor: This is a reprint of an article from 2012 for us to consider as we transition from a time of Thanksgiving and enter into a time of expectant hope — the season of Advent..

The day and season of Thanksgiving is about both “thanks” and “giving.” Usually we focus primarily on the “thanks” part of Thanksgiving, but I believe that there is more to it than this. Let’s take a look at both sides:

Thanks

At Thanksgiving we sincerely give thanks to God because we have received so much – actually everything – from Him, and this is neither a metaphor nor a hyperbole. It is He who has created each of us and who has designed us for 1) fruitful service to Him, and 2) comprehensive happiness in life. Even though we have all sinned and failed God, and everyone does, He has given us Jesus to be our savior. In Jesus we have the only means by which we can receive

eternal life and light. These are just extensions of God’s Kingdom for us and are very different from the kingdom of darkness where confusion, despair, misery and hopelessness reign and where unimaginable and unending pain and suffering are the currency of the realm. This is not a nice place to be in this life or the next, and I expect those who are living there aren’t thankful for much of anything, even on a good day.

If entrance into God’s Kingdom isn’t enough, the Father and His beloved son, Jesus, have given us the most enormous gift possible: the literal indwelling of the Holy Spirit who establishes within us the Kingdom of God (Luke 17:21) and the spiritual comprehension that *God is love* (1 John 4:8). God’s Kingdom and His love are our reality and a primary driving force within our lives. With the indwelling Holy Spirit, we can begin to experience the love that God feels for everyone – even for the most wicked and hateful enemy that we

have. Moreover, with the Holy Spirit, we are equipped to use the powerful spiritual gifts that the Spirit brings with Him. We do indeed have many gifts from God for which we are rightfully thankful.

Everyone who has really accepted Jesus as the Lord of his or her life has found that everything has changed, literally, and it is changed forever. As Jesus’ disciples, we are not only official members of God’s Kingdom (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12), we are also heirs to the Kingdom (Galatians 3:29 & Romans 8:17) and the official Kingdom Ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). This is the reality that brings to us everything that is good and holy, and I really do mean EVERYTHING.

The Pilgrims knew this very well and could see God’s hand reaching out to them in many ways, especially by His giving them new lives in a new land and with new and very helpful

Grow in Thanks and Giving

(Continued from page 1 - THANKSGIVING)

friends (the Native American Indians). God's love, power and provision, they called it God's providence, had kept them alive and had protected them in many ways – and they all knew it. Those very religious Pilgrims were so grateful that they wanted to celebrate, and their original celebration in 1621 has become known to us as the first Thanksgiving.

Today we have the same profound gratitude that the original Pilgrims had, and this leads us to have the same type of gratitude-to-God-centered celebrations.

GIVING

One of the best ways to grow in "thanks" is by "giving" to God and to others. Giving? Aren't we just supposed to be thankful for what we have received at Thanksgiving? While we are supposed to be thankful for what we have received, there is another level of thanksgiving. In order to appreciate fully what we have, we must be able to experience what our giver (God) experiences when He gives to us. When this level of awareness is achieved, then an amazing thing happens within us – we are motivated to spread God's Kingdom and share the goodness and generosity of His love and mercy with anyone who will listen.

Yes, we can actually give to others the means by which we ourselves have received everything for which we are so thankful. What a great gift! How happy God must be when He sees us giving away what He has given to us. How good it is when we allow the

Holy Spirit within us to guide and empower us to give away God's love, salvation, and power (through healing, deliverance, blessings, etc.) in the same way, *and to whom* He himself would give it. This is what it means to be an "Ambassador for Christ" and how our GIVING helps us in our RECEIVING even more from God – and we are definitely more blessed when we give than when we receive (Acts 20:35).

When we choose to give to God by giving to others, we find out that things, really spiritual things, begin to happen both with them and with us. In order to invite God to get actively involved, all we need to do is prayerfully and humbly give some-

thing away: our prayers, our attention, our money, our service, our love, our food or whatever the Holy Spirit wants us to give. We can give directly to those pointed out to us by the Spirit, or we can give indirectly through the community, our church or other ministries who serve the poor and needy. In any event, our giving to others in His name grows "thanksgiving" within others and within us. This is a season for giving away God's love and grace. We already have not only His permission but also His *commission* to give it to anyone who will receive it (Matthew 28:19-20).

This [Advent] season is an opportunity for us all to grow in both our "thanks" and our "giving" – and both are necessary. This could actually be the best [Advent] season any of us have ever experienced if we will only allow the Holy Spirit to show us how to make it so. He can – if we will!

Do You Know What I Like About You?

From Paul Balducci

Last Sunday when going to church, I was asking my grandson Henry (Paul's youngest son) did he know what I liked about him? He said "No." and I told him, "Everything!"

Then I thought about God liking me. He said that He liked everything about me too, just as I had told Henry. He said that He liked the way I USED to be because He knew I would change and get better.... Then He said that He liked the way I AM now because I was changing.... Then He said that He liked the way I will be because I will be better...!

We always hear about His loving us, and He, of course, does. He is calling us so strongly to change so much so fast. Our willingness to relate to people that we "like" versus "love" is a given. Maybe if we "liked" the Lord more, we would learn to "love" Him in a way that would show Him how much we really like being His child.

Family Prayer Time has Benefits

By Bob Routhier

Remember the saying, "A family that prays together, stays together"? When I was young, a long, long, long time ago, that was something we often heard. I would like to be able to say that I grew up in a family where prayer was a regular part of my life, but I can't. As a matter of fact, prayer of any kind was not a part of my life until I was baptized in the Holy Spirit in 1972.

As members of the Alleluia Community, we agree to live out our Covenant and our Rule of Life. Our Covenant agreement #2: ...we agree to be faithful to community prayer.... Rule of Life #1: ...each Alleluia member will be faithful to have a daily prayer time.

Some might say, "But Bob, that doesn't say anything about family prayer." We could say that if we only look at the words, but not the intent. We as a people have committed our lives to serving Jesus Christ, to build His Kingdom as members of Alleluia. Trying to do this without prayer would be like trying to swim across the lake with one pound weights tied to each leg. It could be done by some, I suppose, but it would be a very difficult.

Rule of Life # 2: ...each Alleluia family will be faithful to pray together daily.

Before I go on let me say this ... I do not believe that God wants us to pray because we HAVE to but because we love Him and desire to be one with Him. I believe that all of us believe that family prayer is very important. Many of us have struggled and

are struggling with this. Struggling to fit this into our family schedule can be difficult. I know many families that have great or at least good family prayer, and I know many who have been trying for years to have this working in their lives.

Ginny and I have been married for 29 years, and until 15 months ago, we couldn't make it happen. We tried many times, but nothing worked for us. Thirty Days of September 2013 came and we decided to pray the rosary together every day. I am not saying that this is what everyone should do. This is how we were led and it worked for us. Come October 1st we decided to keep it going because it was working well for us.

We do not have a set time for our prayer; we pray whenever it seems

like a good time. Remember, Ginny and I are retired. It makes a big difference. A few months ago, we started using this time for intercessory prayer, particularly for our families. One day we pray for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren and spouses. The next day we pray for Ginny's family, siblings, their grandchildren, great grandchildren and spouses. We have experienced many benefits from our praying together. Our personal prayer has deepened. We experience God's presence in our lives more than ever. We spend a lot of time together, and I can honestly say that our awareness of God in our lives is better than it ever was.

If you have family prayers, keep it up. If you are struggling, keep trying. The Holy Spirit will show you how to put it together. If you are not now praying as family, or struggling to, DO IT! The bennies are great.

Lady Angels Lost But Show Great Promise

By Coach Mary Cummings

The varsity girls had the opportunity to play in a tournament on November 21st and 22nd. It was a rough start for the girls, but they came into their own during their second game of the day on Saturday, posting a victory over Cherokee.

In playing their third game of the day, the girls finally bowed out of the tournament with a ten point loss to Faith Baptist. The girls gave it everything that they had during this game, playing their hearts out and leaving it all out on the court. The girls showed in this tournament that they have a great season to look forward

to and can only expect to get better from here.

I am very proud of how well they performed at the tournament and look forward to great things from them.



Alleluia Angels Meet Challenge in GRIT Tourney in Cumming

By Coach Dennis McBride

The weekend of November 21st and 22nd, the Alleluia Angels Varsity basketball teams traveled to Cumming, Georgia, to participate in the Greater Regional Invitational Tournament also known as GRIT. The boys team played first on Friday evening at 6:30 against Cherokee Christian school. Although the boys arrived only 20 minutes before game time, they came out fast with Ben Dresser hitting 6 3's in the first half and 7 for the game. The boys team was able to build a sizeable lead which allowed for plenty of playing time for all 17 varsity players.

On Saturday morning the boys played Creekside Christian School and won the game 37 to 32. The next opponent for the Angels at 1:30 p.m. was Faith Baptist out of Luduici, Georgia. The Angels were led in that game by Mac McBride, Hayden Hebert, and Jon Phillips winning by a score of 70-56. As the tournament was a double elimination tournament, the school Alleluia faced in the finals would have to beat them twice in a row to take the title. Alleluia was the only team left undefeated at that point.

Alleluia had strong performances from Ben Dresser, Abe Dresser, Hayden Hebert, Billy Conkright, Stephen Milligan, and Mac McBride to finish undefeated in four games of the tourney and beat Furtah Prep 65-54.

Weekends like this are great brotherhood builders, and it was a team effort for a successful trip. Our managers served and cheered their teammates on every step of the way, and Jimmy Dresser coached, drove the

bus, and washed all the uniforms till 3 a.m. to get ready for the second day of the tournament. Bill Phillips served us as official bookkeeper and storyteller all weekend. Thirty years of trips like these have built relationships and memories that are part of the glue of our life together. The Angels took home the first place trophy at GRIT with All Tournament

nods to Mac McBride and Ben Dresser, but the time spent together using

the gifts God has imparted to us was the real trophy from the weekend.



Ben Dresser (L) and Mac McBride (next to him) make All Tourney



Alleluia Angels Boys Team with Trophy