**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

**Thankfulness in Your Hearts to God**

 ***Colossians 3:12-16***

 **November 27th, In the Year of Our Lord 2022**

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

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**First - Observing Thanksgiving Day. . .**

**We are What We are Thankful For.**

Americans have the national holiday of Thanksgiving Day. We Christians and Jews know that the origin of Thanksgiving is rooted in the Jewish Bible called the TaNaK (The Book of the Law, The Prophets, The Writings.)

**TaNaK** (Hebrew: תנ״ך), or **Tanakh**, is an acronym for the Hebrew Bible consisting of the capital Hebrew letters (T + N + K). These letters represent a major portion of the text. Since the ancient Hebrew language had no written vowels, subsequent vowel sounds were added to the consonants resulting in the word TaNaK. The major portions of the Hebrew Bible represented by these three letters are:

1. [Torah](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Torah) (תורה) meaning "Instruction" or "Law." Also called the *Chumash* חומש meaning: "The five"; "The five books of Moses." Also called the "[Pentateuch](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Pentateuch)." The Torah is often referred to as the law of the [Jewish](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Jewish) people.
2. [Nevi'im](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Nevi%27im) (נביאים) meaning "Prophets." This term is associated with anything to do with the prophets.
3. Ketuvim (כתובים) meaning "Writings." This part of the Tanakh is further separated into different sections including a group of history books, wisdom books, poetry books and psalms.

**Old Testament Origins for Thanksgiving**

**Exodus 34:22-23**

**22** "You shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks, that is, the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year. **23** "Three times a year all your males are to appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel.

**Exodus. 23:16-17**

**16** "Also you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field; also the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field.**17** "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD. (Deuteronomy 16:13-15).

**Leviticus 7:12** 'If he offers it by way of thanksgiving, then along with the sacrifice of thanksgiving he shall offer unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes *of well* stirred fine flour mixed with oil.

**Leviticus 7:15** 'Now *as for* the flesh of the sacrifice of his thanksgiving peace offerings, it shall be eaten on the day of his offering; he shall not leave any of it over until morning.

**Sukkot - Jewish Harvest-Ingathering Festival of the Booths/Tabernacles /Tents, Pilgrim festivals.**

In Temple times, all males were required to appear at the Temple three times annually and actively participate in the festal offerings and celebrations. These were the joyous pilgrim festivals of Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot. Originally, they marked the major agricultural seasons in ancient Israel and commemorated Israel’s early history; but after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A.D., emphasis was almost exclusively placed on the commemorative aspect. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Jewish-religious-year/Pilgrim-festivals

We can see from reading these Scriptures, God called His people to a Harvest/Ingathering Festival in late September or early October. At that time, the Jews celebrated the end of the harvesting time (ingathering) and built sukkots, which are fragile little shelters decorated by fruit, vegetables, twigs and leaves symbolizing the final harvest of the year. The temporary shelters were associated with the tents of ancestors at Sinai.

**America Thanked God from the Beginning**

By virtue of growing-up in America and learning basic (boiler plate) American history, Americans know that the celebration of Thanksgiving on Thursday dates back to the early history of the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies, when post-harvest holidays were celebrated on the weekday regularly set aside as “Lecture Day,” a midweek church meeting where topical sermons were presented. A famous Thanksgiving observance occurred in the autumn of 1621, when Plymouth governor William Bradford invited local members of the Wampanoag tribe to join the Pilgrims in a festival held in gratitude for the bounty of the season.

Thanksgiving became an annual custom throughout New England in the 17th century, and in 1777 the Continental Congress declared the first national American Thanksgiving following the Patriot victory at Saratoga. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/fdr-establishes-modern-thanksgiving-holiday>

America’s 1st President, George Washington, signed a Thanksgiving Proclamation in 1789 and assigned November 26th to be observed.

 **George Washington's
 1789 Thanksgiving Proclamation**

**Whereas i**t 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; and Whereas both 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:"

**Now, therefore**, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 26th day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these 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 previous to their becoming a nation; for the signal and manifold mercies and the favorable interpositions of His providence in the course and conclusion of the late war; for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty which we have since enjoyed; for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enable to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national one now lately instituted' for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge; and, in general, for all the great and various favors which He has been pleased to confer upon us.

**And also** that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions; to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually; to render our National Government a blessing to all the people by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed; to protect and guide all sovereigns and nations (especially such as have show kindness to us), and to bless them with good governments, peace, and concord; to promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science among them and us; and, generally to grant unto all mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as He alone knows to be best.

**Given under my hand**, at the city of New York, the 3d day of October, A.D. 1789. (signed) G. Washington

**Today,** Americans observe the day of Thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday of November. It was Abraham Lincoln who made Thanksgiving a national holiday to be the last Thursday of November. But, in 1939, President Franklin Roosevelt changed the date to be observed on the fourth Thursday in November because the last Thursday sometimes fell on the fifth Thursday of the month.

**Proclamation -Thanksgiving Day** **October 3, 1863**

Starting in the third paragraph . . . . .

*I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens.*

 *And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to his tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may* ***be consistent with the Divine purposes*** *to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union.*

*In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.*

*Done at the city of Washington, this third day of October,* ***in the year of our Lord*** *one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the independence of the United States the eighty-eighth.*

1. ***Lincoln***

**Thanksgiving to The Lord (ESV TEXT)**

**Psalm 116:17** I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord.

**Daniel 2:23** To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter.”

**John 11:41** So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

**Ephesians 5:20 .** . .giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

**1 Thessalonians 5:18** ...give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

**Philippians 1:3-5** I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

**2 Corinthians 9:15** Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

**1 Corinthians 15:57** But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Revelations 7:12** saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

**Thanks, in prayer for our neighbors**

**Ephesians 1:16** I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,

**1 Thessalonians 1:2** We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,

**1 Thessalonians 2:13** And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

**1 Corinthians 11:24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

**Let us now focus on “A Thankful Heart to God”.**

Of all the material things. . . that is, the stuff we have, the things we have lost, the things we have used/consumed, the things we seek and want. . . where does that leave us at night before we go to sleep? What are our thoughts when we wake up? These times of our day tend take the time and focus on what we are thankful for.

 We have all heard the summation of life, “You are what you eat.” Consider. . . “You are what you pursue.” What makes you. . . You?

 Humanities acknowledgement that we are created in God’s image, and God is love (Genesis 1:26,27; 1 John 4:8) brings at least the awareness of what makes us. . . what makes you. . . You.

 It is one thing to be aware of something and another to actually activate what awareness reveals. The key to unlocking the power of God’s love is common knowledge to Believers but to others who Jesus describes as those who cannot see and without ears. . . it is a mystery.

**1 Corinthians 2:14** But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. (Romans 8:7)

Seeking the answer to this mystery is why Nicodemus came to Jesus (John 3) who told him that he had to be reborn of Spirit to see or enter the kingdom of God. Jesus often ended His teachings with, “He who has ears, let him hear.” (Matthew 11:15, 13:9,43; Mark 4:23, 4:9; Luke 14:35; Revelation 2:7,11,17,29, 3:6, 13, 22, 13:9).

So, what do Believers know? Believers know what they have experienced. Believers have surrendered their hearts to the Lord’s indwelling Holy Spirit who guides their life. From my personal experience, the last thoughts I have before I go to sleep are that I made it through another day. Of course, these thoughts were fewer in my youth when I was pursuing the material things. When I was a little boy, my mother would tuck us into bed leading us three boys in a common prayer. I am sure you have heard…

Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep; If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.

 Mother raised us in the acknowledgement that it is God who is the keeper of our souls and from our hearts we give thanks to Him.

**Humanities Built-in Ability**

So, we have built into our psyche (soul) God’s “love-gene” from His core nature affording us the ability to **access** His love nature and share His love nature with others. Hence, the two greatest commands to love God – love neighbor (Deuteronomy 6:5,10:12; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37; Luke 10:27) are paramount in fulfilling our purpose. God created us with the intent to pursue His love.

**Pursuing the Basic Needs? You are What You Pursue!**

 Excluding the offers of the modern material world, what do we actually need? Outside the basic needs of life, what are you pursuing? The basic needs can be listed as water, food, shelter and the ability to defend yourself against opposing forces that are competing for the same life-sustaining resources you cherish. I understand that many have a longer “needs list” for survival than water, food and shelter. Many may add that the shelter may need to have an in-structure water supply and some type of ability to heat and cool the air. Today, we achieve this by “on-demand” hot water heaters, cold running water and central air and heat fueled by gas or electricity. No problem to turn a water-knob on or off or to flip an electric switch to heat or cool a room/house. And of course, we have developed computers to automatically program all of these things so we do not have to even flip switches or turn knobs. Some have voice activated utility systems. And soon with the advancing development of A.I. systems (Artificial Intelligence), we do not even have to think for ourselves. Right? At least that is the goal of those who elevate themselves above everyone else. The secular elite of the fallen world do not want people to think for themselves. The truth is. . . that is the problem with millions of people. . . they have lost the “want” or “ability” to think for themselves because they have pursued their own selfish desires of which God has turned them over to those desires.

 I recently watched a documentary on the ancient world detailing how people lived thousands of years ago. In the country of Turkey, Archeologists continue to find and explore underground cities that stretch for miles and are interconnected with the accommodations for thousands of people. A very different life environment to live in contrast to ours today. I would say a much simpler approach to life with the quest to pursue the basic needs to sustain life were an ever-present daily goal.

All of this long-ago “simplicity of life” is in great contrast to our approach to life in America today. In my lifetime, the need to survive focused on America defending itself against nuclear attack. We have long ago learned to manage our daily need for sustaining water, food and shelter.

**Political Systems Achieve the Basics?**

Over the centuries, mankind has developed many political systems to sustain life. These political systems aim to manage the production of earth’s resources and manage the distribution of that production. And with these competing political systems has come war. Millions of people have died in these wars. We have observed that over 230 million people died in wars in the 20th century. Obviously, fallen humanity, left to their own abilities, failed to create a “love your neighbor” political system to manage these competing interests.

Most of us senior citizens are aware that at the close of WWII Western governments led the way to form the United Nations (Charter 1945) to manage competing state interests around the world. However, the fox was allowed to be part of the leadership in the hen house. I mean. . . with Russia and China as members of the top five countries. The UN Charter of 1945 grants a permanent seat on the UN Security Council: being America, England, France, Russian and China. This was the most likely grouping of leadership in order to get China and Russia to participate. However, history has witnessed the United Nations has not solved the world’s problems. Most often members have used the UN to hide behind and placate the rest of the world while they carry-out their self-interests.

**So, That Was What the Fallen World Pursued.**

**We are Thankful that Through all of the Thousands of Years of God having His plan rejected. . . He never withdraws His love offer which brings peace. . . an eternal peace to all.**

**Therefore, God always offers His eternal peace.**

The Bible chronicles thousands of years of God offering His eternal life-plan of love and peace. And we can see that the vast majority of the time people have rejected God’s plan. I have often said that Biblical Christianity has been rarely lived on planet earth. Let us now read God talking to us through His man Paul. From these words, we can see that God continually reaches-out to us.

**Colossians 3**

**12 So**, as those who have been chosen of God,

holy and beloved, put on a heart of

compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

**13** bearing with one another, and forgiving each other,

whoever has a complaint against anyone;

just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

**14** Beyond all these things put on love,

which is the perfect bond of unity.

**15** Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,

to which indeed you were called in one body;

**and be thankful.**

**16** Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you,

with all wisdom teaching

and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns

and spiritual songs,

singing with **thankfulness in your hearts to God.**

**We are thankful for God’s greatest gift of love which creates our peace.**

**AMEN**