**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

**Thanks to God**

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

 **November 26th, In the Year of Our Lord 2023**

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

Read and/or print sermon notes from our website – roundtopchurch.org

**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** 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; 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 3rd 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”.**

What are our thoughts when we wake up in the morning? Morning is the time of our day when we tend take the time and focus on what we need to do that day. You know. . . the important things, which means for most families that are raising children, the challenge to get the kids breakfast and off to school. Then for working parents. . . to charge-off to a place of work. Then, once at work, a whole new list of “things to do” is brought to bear.

I see that we should be thankful for the opportunity to raise children in the community of our choosing. Yes, in God’s providence, over two-hundred years ago, the American Government is founded upon a unique principle of “We the People”, so stated in the preamble of the U.S. Constitution (Philadelphia 1787). Since that time, we have witnessed the enemies of God desire that “we the people” forget and abandon this basic building block of a free society. So, I am thankful that enough citizens have not capitulated their God-given inalienable right of “We the People”.

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

It is my experience that we senior citizens of America tend to know about these words and have held them near and dear to our hearts since the time we learned them. We are thankful.

And yes, there are some basic things of life we older citizens hold as precious and are thankful. The older we get, I mean us senior citizens, the fact that we woke-up is an achievement to be thankful. Thankful to God that we have another day to be with our families, friends and community. In reflection of our day, we think about many things. Some of our thoughts are about 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? My mother would tuck us three boys in at night and lead us in a common bedtime prayer for children. “Dear God. . . Now, I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep, if I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.” By this prayer, we learned that no matter what happened during the day, the most important thing was our relationship with God the Father. I am thankful for my mom.

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

 God calls for all people to acknowledge that we are created in His image, which is love (Genesis 1:26,27; 1 John 4:8). This one basic realization brings at least the awareness of God’s intent for all of us and begs the question. . . what makes you. . . You? I am thankful for the opportunity in this fallen world to choose love through adversity. I often repeat that “Love is a choice”, and, if love is not freely chosen, it is not love. I am thankful God gave us the choice for love.

 It is one thing to be aware of something and another to activate what that awareness reveals. The key to unlocking the power of God’s love is common knowledge to Believers but to non-believers. . . Jesus describes as those who cannot see and are without ears to hear. . . God’s love 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 Love-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. Again, 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). Jesus spells out this love-mystery in John 3:16. . . “For God so loved the world. . .”

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. Again, I return to the prayer my mother led us in. . .

“Dear God. . . Now, I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep, if I 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.

**Humanity’s 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. I am thankful to God that He created us with the intent to pursue His love.

**We are Thankful that Through all of the Thousands of Years of God having His plan rejected. . . He never withdraws His love offer which He personally demonstrated on the Cross at Calvery 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. 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 earth.

Consider these Scriptures as God speaks through Paul. We can see that God continually reaches-out to us. We are thankful for God’s greatest gift of love which creates our peace.

**Colossians 3:12-16**

**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.**

**AMEN**