

THANKSGIVING

By Alden Truesdell

A MAN need not know all there is to know about God in order to be a good man, or to have good. His least attention Godward will attune him (to the degree of that attention) to that which enables him to be good, do good, and have good.

The attitude with which the attention is given and the manner in which its results are received determine the amount of the good. If the attention is critical and the manner of receiving unappreciative, this avenue of goodness will be of little value to the petitioner. But if the attention is aspiring, and the reception appreciative, the avenue broadens, the consciousness expands, the sense of being flourishes.

Thanksgiving is something anyone can give; so it becomes one end of the law of giving and receiving. Man did not make this law, any more than he made the law of gravity. But he may recognize, acknowledge, and keep the law. He may give thanks to and for the law.

Thanksgiving has always been a form of prayer. For those few who use it consistently, it acts as invocation and petition, because the more gratitude expressed, the greater the flow of benefits and blessings. It is altogether fitting that a great nation should set aside a day to be thankful. And we understand that this day should be dedicated to God. Although we are grateful to friend and parent for kind interest and service, we distinguish between such gratitude and thanksgiving to God. Thanksgiving Day is God's Day.

The Psalmist seems to be the most consistent giver of thanks in the realm of sacred recording. The Psalmist knew his Principle of Thanksgiving and how to set it into motion. Let us examine the technique of an artist:

"Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High."

"O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods."

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. . . . Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth unto all generations."

We could well do with a psalmist for a guest-writer. The joyous expression of appreciation for an immanent God would do much to hasten the advent in consciousness of Him who brings the Kingdom of Joy on earth.

Someone has expressed a vital principle in saying: "If you don't have what you want, start wanting what you have." At first, it may not seem that what one has is desirable. But let another start to take away that which he

has, and his sense of values undergoes a change. An example of this is the casual suitor who sees no urgency in courting his girl friend until another man becomes interested.

Lack of appreciation is noticeable. Failure to give thanks is a regrettable omission, and a costly one, regardless of excuses for that omission. A "thank you" takes little time and effort; it pays rich dividends. A "thank you" is so easy to say and so fraught with fortunate results that it is little wonder the Psalmist cried out: "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

Whoever has the presence of mind to give thanks of the treasures in heaven and the gifts of the Spirit will be recipient thereof and a witness of the Kingdom of God with men.

How grateful we are for the pioneers of Truth, who withstood the siren call of the world with its distractions, the flesh with its preasurable practices, that we might hear the Truth, and be released from bondage to the three-ring circus called "life."

How grateful we are for the demonstration of the efficacy of the true practices we have learned!

How grateful we are for failure to demonstrate some fancied vanity that would have distracted us from greater glories!

How grateful we are for the operation that the great Surgeon is performing on our consciousness and our soul!

Thanksgiving was a mighty practice with the prophets of old, and miracles can be traced to its exercise. The prophet Isaiah commanded: "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted."

The Psalmist promised, "Everyday will I bless Thee, and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever." The composers of the Psalms were specific in praise to God; we find little was overlooked by them. They praised God for His righteousness, His mercy, His excellent greatness, His strength, His truth, His wonders, His faithfulness, His great and terrible name, His holiness, His loving-kindness, His word, His glory, His power, and for having dealt bountifully with them.

The entire doctrine of praise and thanksgiving can be summed up in the Psalmist's cry: "Praise ye the Lord; for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely."

None of the persons giving voice to this elaborate praise enjoyed blessings such as the ordinary citizen of our country takes for granted. These pioneers struggled for their meager sustenance, even for their lives. But they found much for which to be thankful. It is good for us that they did; for their praise and the expressions of thanksgiving of their sincere followers have been responsible for much of the wealth the world has since enjoyed. Everyone born into the world today enters into the benefits of other men's labors, and will take for granted as his just due the fruits of the practices of his progenitors, the trail-blazers.

What might any psalmist find to praise here in this country? But why should we wait for a psalmist to teach us acceptable and divine manners? We should honor these giants of old, but should not expect them to do for us what they hoped they had taught us to do for ourselves.

If we require reasons for the practice of praise and thanksgiving, then we must see ourselves delinquent. For praise is not a specific act for a specific gift; it is a spiritual privilege of a spiritual creature.

As we trace the expressions of praise from the Psalmist to Jesus we find the wordiness decreasing. Where the Psalmist required whole songs, Jesus Christ almost apologized for his unnecessary use of spoken words, explaining that he used them because of the people standing by. His own effective prayer of thanksgiving was not in spoken words, but in a silent attitude of grateful appreciation. When he did speak, it was with a quiet assurance: "Father, I thank Thee that thou hast heard Me. And I knew that thou hearest me always."

So we may choose our method of thanksgiving. If, like the Psalmist, we carefully list our blessings, we shall have an imposing, even cumbersome, list. It might be awkward to memorize so many items. But it is a profitable practice, and God is longsuffering. He will bear with the verbiage, so long as the intent is sincere.

Or, like Isaiah, we may exercise our prerogative of command. He told the heavens and the earth to praise the Lord. This is profitable, if we understand the heavens as representing the higher consciousness and the earth whatever has form. For both respond to the magic of praise and thanksgiving.

But if we want to be truly modern, we shall express gratitude just of the fun of it, just for the joy of giving. Gratitude will be a joyous, spontaneous attitude of life rather than studied words for specific benefits.

If we are ever, for a moment, distracted from consideration of self-possession, self-motivation, self-seeking to the contemplation of God's All-capacity, God's Motivation, God's Purpose, we shall feel inadequate to be grateful enough.

Thanksgiving in its highest form is the giving of the grateful self and substance to the Creator of that self and the Giver of the substance. To him who is thus of a grateful heart the Christ comes speedily.

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WHY LOVE GOD?

By Nell Truesdell

"You and I are friends, Nell; so I ask you, Why do I have to put up with limitations? I never have what I want!" With this outburst, my visitor settled back in her chair.

"What do you want?"

"Oh, I don't know - things that will ease the pressures - you know what I mean." She grinned and said, "All you will talk about is God. Well, go on; I need it."

"If you were drowning and somebody threw you a life line, what would you do?"

"I'd grab and hold on until he pulled me in. What else would I do?"

"Wouldn't you also be grateful for the person that threw out the life line?"

Nodding her head in the affirmative, she said, "Of course, I'd be grateful."

"Perhaps. You love life and for that reason would hold onto the line. But you might be casual toward the person that threw the line to you."

"I love life, of course; and if I fell into the sea I'd appreciated the help anybody gave. But what has all that to do with my present exasperating situation? Loving life does not solve my problems."

"The point we want to understand," I said with emphasis, "is that we are apt to value some thing that helps us at a given time and overlook the giver that made the thing available at the right instant."

Since my visitor remained silent I continued: "We look for things to solve our problems, but they never do. In Truth practice we must learn to love God, the Source of all things. Our love for God opens in our consciousness a hidden door to His storehouse. Then His divine Activity is released. As It flows in and out, Universal Essentials are stirred up and become our provision, our supply. We step down God's Activity by translating it in terms of things that we want, but whatever we want is just a supplement to life. Things simply give new direction to our life. But we do not even own our life." I spoke firmly as I repeated, "You do not own life."

"That's incredible! I am alive! If I don't own my life, then who does?"

"God does," I said. "God owns your next breath, your next heartbeat. God is the sustaining Principle of your existence. Be grateful to God; love God; cling to His Activity in you and He will pull you to safety." I paused a few seconds, then said, "God needs you as much as you need Him. You are His area of Activity."

"Makes me feel important - also uneasy." She shifted in her chair.

"You are important to God. Look at it this way: If you left your area of activity, it would collapse. Your presence and your efforts keep that area in good running order. So it is with God. If he left you, that area of His Activity would collapse. However, understand this: God will never desert you as long as you hold on to His Activity in you - consciously or unconsciously."

"I'm beginning to see the point," she said. "I ought to be grateful that I am alive; and, really," she said, "I'm not so bad off."

"Nobody is as bad off as he would have others believe. Each person is in the exact place in the world where he can do the most good - for God, for himself, and for others. The trick is that he keep his attention on God, not on

the things he wants. If he strives for things, he hangs onto a life line that is not fastened to a dock or held by some strong arm.

"If we steadfastly look toward God in our midst," I continued, "the irritations and apparent limitations of existence will shrink because the value we have set on them will decrease."

We sat silent for a few minutes; then I said, "The impact of our attention toward God and God's response to us results in a mystical integration of awareness - a joint-action, that unshackles the God-Activity and frees It from our negative mental grip so that It is able to distill Its spiritual Essences throughout our consciousness. These released Essences then circulate through our consciousness and provide us with whatever things we need. Remember that Jesus said that God knows what things we need before we do.

"The problems that you are accenting offer you an opportunity to deal with God. The problems are your misinterpretation of God's assignment. Your work is to love Him more and to cling to His Activity in you. God's Activity will furnish the necessary workable commodities to meet your needs. A more expanded awareness of God is what you want, don't you think?"

Thoughtfully she replied, "Yes, that is what I want."

After our prayer, she arose and extended her hand. More than words could say, her clasp told me that she understood and was grateful.

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FOR BEGINNERS

Q. Why do I think so many unrelated thoughts when I try to pray?

A. When you try to make your mind a vacuum, random thoughts rush in to pack the empty space. If you do not reach a place of complete quiet during prayer, give yourself an assignment. E.g., make a series of denials and affirmations in an earnest manner. Consider the words carefully so that you may receive new meaning from them, but do not permit your thoughts to wander. Finish a prayer period with the Lord's Prayer.

Q. Why do denials disturb me?

A. You may think that they suggest deprivation, but they do not. Remember how when you were a child, you disliked taking a bath? The feel of freedom that you enjoyed by going barefoot, playing in the dust, and making mud pies seemed to be lost when you had to wash. Denial is a way of taking a bath. The consciousness is washed clean of the accumulated grime of negation. Make denials in a general way - universal statements; e.g.: "There is no evil." "I am not subject to the world's limitations." Follow denials with the balm of affirmation; e.g.: "God is good and God is all." "For freedom did Christ make me free." We are free when we declare what is true - that God is good and God is all. Earnest practice will teach you more than we can in this limited space.

Q. What is Power?

A. Power is the producing Principle that does things. Spiritual Power flows through you much as mechanical power flows through an engine. If an engine got the idea that it could use power in another way than that for which it was designed, it would break down. So it is with us: if we attempt to use Power to suit our purposes we are apt to misuse it and will suffer for our mistake. The only true Power is Love. Nothing is impossible when we love what we are doing or love the one for whom we are doing something. God's Love for us provides us with a working Principle that is a blessing when we, in turn, love Him and let Him have His way with us.

Q. Does God let us make mistakes?

A. God gave man free will. Man may discover God's Will, which is always good, and be receptive to it. When we make a mistake, it - not God - punishes us.

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SOME WORDS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

By Robert Applegate, Jr., Ph.D

PEACE I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." (John 14:27)

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:23)

For a Jew "peace" (shalom) meant more than tranquility or the cessation of strife. Shalom was a very common word with the Jews (as it still is); it meant everything we mean by the word "peace" and more besides. It meant, first, friendship with God, or being on good terms with Him, without any sense of guilt or sin. And then it included everything that is conducive to security, well-being, and happiness. It was the inclusive term for God's blessings to man, for all that man considers desirable. The nearest English equivalent is perhaps "goodness," although that word has come to have a sanctimonious connotation when used in a religious context.

Jesus Christ was of course a Jew and when He used the word "peace" - whether he spoke in Aramaic or Greek - He used it with its full Hebrew connotation. Thus in the promises quoted above, he is offering us a great deal more than tranquility - desirable as that is. We could say that the "peace" we find in Him is the opposite of the "tribulation" (i.e. the vexation, agitation, irritation, and frustration) that we find in the world. Such peace would include a sense of fulfillment, a sense of well-being, a sense of satisfaction. It is that joy of the Lord that everyone who has experienced it admits cannot be described to anyone who has not experienced it (just as you cannot explain what it is like to be "in love" to a person who has never had the experience of being in love).

Shalom was a favorite Jewish greeting; so we find "peace" in the opening words of all the new Testament letters (except James and John). Again the word is used in its full Hebrew meaning, as it is throughout the whole New Testament.

As Professor Moffatt writes, "'Peace' carries its full Semitic sense of bliss and well-being, due to the goodwill and free favour of God."

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"This is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:40)

"(You) are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (I Peter 1:5)

The "last day" or "last time" (eschate hemera, eschate hora) is not, as has often been supposed, the end of the world. The expression comes a lot closer to what we mean by the "eleventh hour." The "last day" is that time when a person can do nothing for himself, when he is entirely dependent on the Lord, when his former devotion to God sustains him, or when his former neglect of God lets him down. It is in this time of transition, this time of man's helplessness, that God's deliverance is revealed, as Peter says, in the second quotation above.

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"These all (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, etc.) died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embrace them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Hebrews 11:13)

"Peter . . . to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia.
. . ." (I Peter 1:11)

The same word that is translated "pilgrims" in Hebrew (*parepidemos*) is rendered "strangers" in First Peter. (The Revised Standard Version uses "exiles" in both places.) The meaning is all the same: it is that the "world" is not our home; heaven is our home. We are not at home in this realm of mortality, which is why we are so continuously restless and dissatisfied. We are sojourners - exiles, strangers, pilgrims - here; we should conduct ourselves as such, setting our affection not on the temporary things with which we are surrounded, but on the eternal things that are freely offered to us. "For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.
. . . They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly."

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Alphabet of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Week Day of the Month

November 1960

1. Can two walk together, except they be AGREED?
2. The God of love and peace shall BE with you.
3. A merry heart maketh a CHEERFUL COUNTENANCE.
4. DAILY shall He be praised.
5. In EVERYTHING ye are ENRICHED by Him.
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7. How FORCIBLE are right words.
8. The GIFT of GOD is eternal life.
9. HE sent HIS word and HEALED them.
10. Love one another, as I have loved you.
11. Let JUDGMENT run down as waters.
12. We shall KNOW, if we follow on to KNOW the Lord.
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14. LIVE in the Spirit.
15. The Lord thy God in the MIDST of thee is MIGHTY.
16. Thy NAME is from everlasting to everlasting.
17. OBTAIN gladness and joy.
18. PREPARE to meet thy God.
19. The effect of righteousness (is) QUIETNESS.
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21. Let us RETURN unto the Lord.
22. SEEK the Lord and ye SHALL live.
23. TEACH me Thy paths.
24. The Lord lift UP His countenance UPON thee.
25. O VISIT me with Thy salvation.
26. The WAYS of the Lord are right.
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28. YEA, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.
29. Where is thy ZEAL?
30. My heart standeth in awe of Thy Word, O Lord.

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"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

SPIRITICITY is the Working Power of the Spiritual Principle
as electricity is the working power of the electrical principle.