

Count Your Blessings, For God Indeed is Good

Read Time: 4 Minutes 42 Seconds

Thanksgiving Day is just a few days away for U.S. Americans. It is a favorite holiday—perhaps only exceeded by Christmas—to gather with family and friends to watch parades, play (American) “football” and eat delicious food—often from legacy recipes!

Ostensibly, this cherished time together is in the tradition of our nation’s Pilgrim ancestors, who gathered 400 years ago—after a hard first year in their new land—to give thanks and gratitude to their gracious and generous God. Their focus was, as ours should likewise be, to thankfully celebrate the blessings received and those yet anticipated from our most benevolent Benefactor.

From preschoolers to “old schoolers,” we can simply use this holiday as a holy day and humbly express our gratitude for our God’s unmerited favor and bountiful blessings. Parents and grandparents can guide their children in meaningfully counting their blessings—remembering and reflecting on their health, family, love and life itself. But such gratitude must be directed to someone.

It is meaningless, otherwise. Our ultimate gratitude must be to God Almighty, the “giver of every good and perfect gift.”

Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God has done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done!

Thanksgiving, Gratitude and Blessing

Three words—thanksgiving, gratitude and blessing, in one grammatical form or another—are often used together or even interchangeably at this special season. I regularly see them as imperatives on inspirational posters, coffee mugs and book titles: “Be Thankful,” “Be Grateful” or the ubiquitous “Be Blessed!” Or, perhaps, even more often these days, I see the inspirational affirmation, “I AM blessed!” But there are important distinctions in their definitions and aspirations.

A thankful person is motivated to express gratitude and praise to God for what He has done and what He has yet promised to do. By faith, we can lift up our hands and give proper praise to God and bless His holy name (Ps. 34:2).

Dr. Michael Youssef, in his book “Empowered by Praise,” says that “gratitude is demonstrated by a determination to express thanks, a promptness in voicing thanks, an intensity in expressing thanks and a life of humility.” He illustrated these insights with the thankful leper Jesus told about in Luke 17. The social outcast fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving profound thanks and praise for his healing. He was the only one of 10, outcast lepers who had been miraculously healed by Jesus, yet he was prompt and intense in voicing his gratitude and thankfulness!

“Know that the Lord Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations” (Ps. 100:3-5; NASB).

The Psalmist seemed to know how to express his grateful praise, in giving thanks for the bountiful blessings we receive at the hands of our good, loving and faithful Lord and Master! He is our omnipotent God, our marvelous Creator and our caring Shepherd! No wonder the Psalmist urges us to:

“...give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind. Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy” (Ps. 107:21-22, NIV).

If we cultivate an “attitude of gratitude” we will find an atmosphere of joy and happiness. I recently found this affirmed in an old truism, “He who forgets the language of gratitude can never be on speaking terms with happiness.” Instead of focusing on things we don’t have, we must learn to be content with what we do have. It is the way to godliness (1 Tim. 6:6-8).

Near the beginning of Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians, he praised God as the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). He went on to identify some of those blessings as including being chosen and adopted into the Family of God, redeemed through Christ’s blood, bringing the forgiveness of our sinful trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.

Near the close of this meaningful epistle, Paul gave instructions in chapter 5 on how we can “avoid the unfruitful deeds of darkness” by being “filled with” or controlled by the Spirit, “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father” (Eph. 5:11-20, NASB).

Did you follow that progression? We can walk as children of light by rejecting the disgraceful deeds of darkness (vv. 6-14), singing to the Lord and sharing encouraging words and testimonies of thankfulness with one another, “in the fear of Christ” (vv. 15-21).

Paul taught the Thessalonians we should “rejoice always; pray

without ceasing; [and] in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 5:16-18; NASB)

The Psalmist calls us to "come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods..." (Ps. 95:1-4)

Testimony of Thanksgiving, Gratitude and Blessings

This past year, one of our relatives has endured surgery and treatments for cancer. Some weeks were harder than others! But, she was regularly reassured by the notes, messages and prayers of her family and friends—for 11 months! Finally, by God's grace and goodness, the doctors have uttered the "R" word—REMISSION! Hallelujah!

Now, she is showing her extreme thankfulness and gratitude by acknowledging one blessing each day this month on Facebook, with 30 special expressions of thanksgiving! She wants others to know and rejoice with her in this special Thanksgiving season, so that "many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many." (See 1 Corinthians 1:8-11; NIV).

Happy Thanksgiving! {eoa}

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