The Foundation of Thanksgiving

Psalm 100:4-5

INTRODUCTION:

A. In a nutshell: **Thanksgiving must be given to the one responsible for whatever it is that we are thankful for.** Regardless of our blessings, everyone who has a relationship with God can give thanks to God for these three things: The Lord is Good; His love endures forever; and His faithfulness endures to all generations.

B. History of Thanksgiving.

1. In the Spring, after their survival of that first difficult winter, the Pilgrim settlers of Plymouth Colony began planting their first crops. In the Fall, with help from their Indian neighbors, they gathered in their first harvest. With a spirit of excitement, the Pilgrims invited the Indians who had helped them to join them in a three day feast of wild turkey, venison and vegetables, to celebrate God's faithfulness. This first thanksgiving feast in the new colonies took place in 1619. In 1623, Governor William Bradford of the Plymouth Colonies made this proclamation...

   "Inasmuch as the great Father has given us this year an abundant harvest of Indian corn, wheat, peas, beans, squashes, and garden vegetables, and has made the forests to abound with game and the sea with fish and clams, and inasmuch as He has protected us from the ravages of the savages, has spared us from pestilence and disease, has granted us freedom to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience.

   Now I, your magistrate, do proclaim that all you Pilgrims, with your wives and your little ones, do gather at the meeting house, on the hill, between the hours of 9 and 12 in the day time, on Thursday, November 29th, of the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred and twenty three and the third year since you Pilgrims landed on Pilgrim Rock, there to listen to your pastor and render thanksgiving to Almighty God for all His blessings."

2. On **November 26, 1789**, President George Washington issued a Proclamation for a nation-wide day of thanksgiving. He made it clear that this day should be one of prayer and giving thanks to God. It was celebrated by people of all religious denominations throughout this new country.

3. Later, President Abraham Lincoln made a proclamation in **1863**, designating the last Thursday of November as Thanksgiving Day, a day for the nation to give thanks to Almighty God. The date was later changed to the fourth Thursday of November, by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1941, in order to encourage holiday shopping.

4. But things in the United States of America, started to change in **1962**. That was the year the Supreme Court banned state-directed prayers in the public schools. Then in **1963**, the Supreme Court banned Bible reading for religious purposes in the public school. Seventeen years later, in **1980**, the Supreme Court said schools could no longer post the Ten Commandments**. The High Court classified them as "plainly religious". Their ruling said that the existence of the Ten Commandments in a classroom might prompt children . . . "To read, ponder, revere, or obey these commandments."** And that's how our national religious heritage began to be eliminated from public life.

C. William Bennett what served as secretary of education under President Reagan wrote this about these anti-religious court decisions . . .

"In too many places in American public education, religion has been ignored, banned or shunned in ways that serve neither knowledge, nor the Constitution, nor sound public policy. There is no good curricular or constitutional reason for textbooks to ignore, as many do, the role of religion in the founding of this country or its prominent place in the lives of many of its citizens. We should acknowledge that religion—from the Pilgrims to the civil rights struggle—is an important part of our history, civics, literature, art, music, poetry, and politics, and we should insist that our schools tell the truth about it."

D. So, this week, the celebration of the Christian based holiday of Thanksgiving can be summed up for many people as a fourth-grader summed it up when he stood to give a report about the origins of this holiday. Here's how he began...

The pilgrims came here seeking freedom of you know what.
When they landed, they gave thanks to you know who.
Because of them, we can worship each Sunday, you know where.

E. **Illustration:** Every year, beginning about shortly after Thanksgiving, , many of us send out Christmas cards to friends and relatives all over the country. The purpose for these cards is to send holiday greetings and messages of love and appreciation to people who matter significantly to us. But the United States postal service will tell you that the messages of many of these cards and letters will not reach the intended people if they are addressed wrongly. I've read that the postal service estimates that over 2 million letters will be stamped, "Return to sender, addressee unknown" this year alone because they have the incorrect address printed on the front of the envelope. And no matter how sincere the sentiments of those cards and letters are, if they aren't addressed properly, they will not get delivered, and the messages will not be

received. Well, that's something like Thanksgiving has become in the last 30 or so years in this country. We have a lot of people all over these United States who spend time on this holiday sending messages of thanks for things they have, or relationships they enjoy, or situations in which they live, or blessings they experience, . . . but the messages are not received because the message has been stamped "Addressee Unknown". **You see, when God has been taken out of the realm of their thankfulness, thanks is not delivered to the one to whom it rightfully belongs.**

F And the Bible has much to say about to whom we are to give thanks. One particular verse that comes to mind is found in James 1:17 – "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

1. James clearly tells us that God is the one who gives every good and perfect gift to human beings.
2 Therefore, God is the one who ultimately deserves our thanks. But when we take God out of the equation of thankfulness, as many are doing in our increasingly un-Christian culture, we are left with something like mailing a letter with no address on the outside. So the message doesn't get delivered.

THANKSGIVING THAT IS FOUNDATIONAL

A. Illustration: Many of you have seen a three-legged stool. There is an interesting thing about a three-legged stool. It will not stand on two legs, and it will not stand on one leg. It will only stands on three legs. But when it stands on all three legs, that stool becomes a very firm foundation for sitting and resting your weight when you're tired.

1. If I were to ask you what you were thankful for, many of you would name things like family or friends or jobs or pay checks or our church or leaders who are in our lives. But
what if all those things were removed from your life?
2. Most of those things that I've just mentioned have a chance of changing—just read about Job in the Old Testament. In a short period of a few days, he lost his crops, his home, his family, and everything he had worked for—even his friends turned against him. Could he have celebrated Thanksgiving Day?

B. Psalm 100:4-5 – "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.
5 For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations."

C. **<u>Three Legs of our foundation of thanks</u>**.

1. "For the Lord is good."

a. When God is on your side . . . you will win.
b. **Illustration**: Our baseball team in Bridgeport, Alabama. Choosing up at recess in elementary school and then later in Physical education in junior high and high school. Certain players chosen would make you feel good about playing the game.

2. "His mercy is everlasting."
   a. Various renderings of this leg of thanks translated from the Hebrew language.
      1. Another translations renders it, "His love endures forever."
      2. Another translation renders it "loving kindness."
   b. The Hebrews words suggests three things:
      1. Steadfastness
      2. Strength
      3. Compassion.
   c. God's goodness will never change towards His people.
   d. **Illustration**: Returning from Tampa, FL . . . Caught in Blizzard . . . four wheel drive truck pulled me over the hill.
   e. Regardless of what is happening in your life . . . God stands ready, willing and able to help pull through.
3. "His truth endures to all generations."
   a. We remember much about the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites, don't we. On one occasion they came across an enemy nation who wanted to destroy them. They went into battle. Listen to what happened.
      Exodus 17:8-13 – "Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim.
      9 And Moses said to Joshua, 'Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.'
      10 So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.
      11 And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.
      12 But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; **and his hands remained steady until the going down of the sun**.
      13 So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.
   b. The phrase "remained steady" is the same word for faithfulness.
   c. Just like Aaron and Hur held Moses' arms so they remained steady

when he had no strength of his won, so Israel could win the battle . . . that's the way God is in our lives. He holds us up when we are weak. He's never going to leave us, even in the most difficult situations.

d. The Psalmist tells us that God demonstrates this faithfulness . . . this steadfastness
all generations.
e. God is always by the side of each of His children to give whatever help is needed in order to accomplish the purpose He has for our lives.
f. What an incredible truth . . . That's faithfulness.

CONCLUSION:

A. Psalm 100:1-5 – "Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all you lands!
2 Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing.
3 Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.
4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.
5 For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations."

B. **Be thankful to a merciful God who loves you very, very much . . . . . Do you love Him enough to obey Him today?**

C. Listening friends, the privilege of being able to thank God for the reality of His goodness . . . And the reality of His steadfast love . . . And the reality of His faithfulness in your life, only comes when you belong to Him.
1. Do you belong to Him?
2. Will you come and obey the gospel of Christ this very hour?
3. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation**