

WHAT TO THANK FOR AFTER 30 YEARS OF SERVICE?
Psalms 116, Luke 17:11-19

Int. John Williams, a patrolman of the State of Ohio, serves as Auto Safety Inspector for defects on vehicles. He inspect about 150 vehicles a month and some of the inspections are unusual. One morning he stopped a cadillac and found several hogs or pigs in the back seat. "I'd been on the job four years at that time, and I thought I'd seen everything. There were big clumps of mud as big as your fist all over the car. It looked like piggery." When the owner of the car was asked if he thought it was a bit strange to be hauling pigs in a new Cadillac, he answered, "If it weren't for all my pigs, I would not be able to drive a Cadillac."

Our celebration today is to give credit to whom credit is due for what we are as a church and as an individual Christian. It has been a general observation however that many are timid to express their grateful feelings to the persons concern. Like an experience of a widow who had spent long days and hours in the factory and at home raising her four children, lay exhausted and emaciated on her deathbed.

Around he stood the four of them, now grownup men and women. The eldest son, in tears, said to her, "Mother, you have always been so good and kind to us. We want to thanks you. we're so proud of you."

The mother opened her eyes and asked, "Why have you waited so long to tell me that? You never said so before." She turned her head away and died.

It may be that we are really grateful but we don't know how to express them. Like the Psalmist asking himself, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?" The Psalmist was enlightened by the inspiration of the holy that he came to the conclusion and answered his own question: "I will offer a sacrifice of thank offering to God and call on the name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of His people, and in the courts of his house I will praise the Lord." How is that compared to our thanksgiving today? Does it come near!

It is however to admit that even Christians have short memories, not like the Psalmist who said: "Praise the Lord, my soul and do not forget how kind he is" (Ps. 103:2). Oftentimes, we forget God's kindness to us when our hearts are hardened by the cares and fleeting joys of life. We believe that Godf is good and faithful, yet we have to admit that this is a harsh and cold world we are living in, so we feel that sometimes we have nothing to thank God for.

It was said that the late Bishop Jose Valencia always found something to thank God even in bad times. One stormy morning a member of his congregation thought, "Our today will have nothing to thank God on a wretched morning like this. But Pastor Valencia during his thanksgiving prayer said: "We thank Thee O God, that it is not always like this." Such a spirit was exhibited by the Rev. Samuel Wesley when he found out that all his children were saved from the that fire ravaged all their properties , he cried out in joy: "Come neighbors! Let us kneel down!"

Let us give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children. Let the house go. I am rich enough".

Indeed, God deserves our highest thanksgiving and so let us praise and thank God for everything. Let us consider too that there are men and women and institutions who have been channels and instrument of God to bring His grace and blessings to us. It is possible that without their faith and obedience God's blessings may not have come on time to bring relief and strength to us. Let us thank them too.

Now how shall we thank God this thanksgiving Day and everyday? Let us look at the ways:

1. Let us begin with simple things of our days, fresh air to breathe and cool water to drink, the taste of food, and the simple fact that we are alive today.

2. Let us bring to mind all the warmth of humankind that we have known- our mothers arms, the strength of our father, the playmates of childhood, the best friends that walked with us, the stories gained from the lives of many days gone by, the tears we have shed and seen from happiness and sorrow and the twinkle of eyes reminding us that life is sweet;

3. Now we recite the messages of hope at the crossroad- the smile of approval that holds the reign of our destiny, the whisper in the heart when temptations were fierce, the message of courage from a friend's letter or from the book called the Bible, these and to all them, our thanks;

4. We look at things as huge heaps for our disposal, our satisfaction and life. Many and most of the things that we are enjoying are heritage from the past and our forbears. Many of us are still living from the house and lot bought and built by our parents or grandparents. Many of us are still supported and our subsidized by the real properties which were the fruits of our elders sweat and blood. The freedom that we have everyday, are not a heritage we should be thankful of.

5. Now the faith that we now hold dear meant more than life can bestow. The church workers whose dedication and courage touched the hearts of our foreparents, by whose faith we now have today. The church workers and lay leaders of this church for the past 30 years have written by their blood of faith the history and life of this congregation which we now enjoy today.

6. Lastly but not the least the people around us today who brings help and inspiration to us in many various ways that is making our life worth living. They maybe the closest to our hearts- our spouse, our children, our parents, and our sweethearts. They maybe our co-workers, our friends, our neighbors, members of our fellowship, and or casual traveler on the way. We owe them so much, that we must feel under compulsion to give thanks for God's glory and to bring inspiration for those persons whose lives and good deeds brought abundance to many.

Though thanksgiving is strictly a voluntary attitude, a choice we have to make, yet it produces joy as we learn to appreciate that which we receive in daily blessings. Thanksgiving is actually giving, so when we do it, it teaches us to share. thus in multiplied ways, our gratitude spills over into the lives of those around us, and, like everything contagious, begins to be seen in others.

So by God's grace and by His help, let us take the challenge of the Psalmist, the tenth Leper and Our Lord Jesus himself on the night he was betrayed took the bread and the cup and gave thanks. Let us joined the words and spirit of the hymn that beacons us, saying:

Now thank we all our god with hearts and hands and voices;
Who wondrous things hath done in whom His world rejoices;
Who, from our mothers' arms hath blessed us on our way,
With countless gift of love, and still is our today!