

Words of Life

(November 20, 2007)

in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Last Sunday evening my wife and I watched 60 Minutes on television. At the end of the show Andy Rooney came on to do his spot and began to speak about the Thanksgiving Holiday. What he said was terribly sad to me. He began his negative assessment by saying "the problem with Thanksgiving is that we don't know who to thank." He then went on to talk about family, extended family, friends, etc. But nowhere in his commentary was there any reference to God. This was his opinion but he made it come across like it was common among all Americans.

Thanksgiving has always been a favorite time of year in our home. We have so much to be thankful for. Even in the most difficult of circumstances, we are a blessed people. But to lose sight of who to give thanks to is a sad commentary on Mr. Rooney's outlook. No wonder the rest of his commentary was so negative. Once we eliminate God from the picture, everything becomes negative.

It is a tradition in our home to go around the table during our Thanksgiving meal and tell of those things we are thankful for. As we are instructed in the verse above, it is the will of God that we give thanks. It is not enough to "be" thankful. The scripture tells us we are to "give" thanks. So I would encourage you to do the same this year. Take a few moments with your family and friends to express your thanks for the things God has done for you this year.

One person I am thankful for every year on this special holiday is Abraham Lincoln. We are blessed to have a godly president in our history that stood for righteousness in a very difficult time in the life of our nation. The fact that we celebrate thanksgiving today as a national holiday is due to the passage of a bill sponsored by Abraham Lincoln on October 3, 1863.

The fascinating thing to me is that this bill came dead center during the Civil war. War broke out in April, 1861 and ended in April, 1865. The war had escalated and hundreds of thousands had already died. And right smack in the middle of it all we have a president who took the time and effort to fall on his face before almighty God and give thanks! This is a testimony to the fact that in the midst of the most severe circumstances, we can be thankful. I can imagine Abraham Lincoln had a few other things on his mind as the Civil War raged on and the nation was facing the very real possibility of being ripped apart. As men fought and died on the battlefield, our president bowed his head and humbled himself before God and submitted the Thanksgiving Day Proclamation to Congress for approval.

There is one more astounding fact concerning this proclamation and in particular the date it was passed. 1863 is viewed by historians as being the turning point in the war. I wonder if our president had not taken the stand he did, and called us to remember our God in our time of need, what the outcome would have been. It is apparent from the history books that the same year we as a nation remembered our God, He in His grace turned the tide of the war.

No Mr. Rooney, we have not forgotten who to give thanks to. "if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Pastor Ted

The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

John 6:63

The following is a copy of Abraham Lincoln's Proclamation. Please take time to read it this year and reflect on the history behind the holiday.

Proclamation Establishing Thanksgiving Day

October 3, 1863

The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union. Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defence, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle, or the ship; the axe had enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years, with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and voice by the whole American people. 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, tranquillity and Union.

By the President of the United States of America

Abraham Lincoln