

Thanksgiving

Matthew 20:1-16

1 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! 2 Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! 3 Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! 5 For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

The first American Thanksgiving didn't occur in 1621 when a group of Pilgrims shared a feast with a group of friendly Indians. The first recorded thanksgiving took place in Virginia more than 11 years earlier, and it wasn't a feast. But help arrived. Ralph Waldo Emerson paraphrased the words of the Apostle Paul saying, "Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously. And because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude." For what are you thankful?

I. We Are To Shout - Vs. 1, Luke 17:11ff

Nine of the ten lepers did not return thanks.

Lincoln bought a barrel and got a book. Lincoln later wrote, "I stood there holding the book and looking up toward the heavens. There came a deep impression on me that God had something for me to do and He was showing he now that I had to get ready for it. Why this miracle otherwise?" When you realize that God has done miracles for you and it causes you to fulfill God's command to shout and tell others about Him.

II. We Are To Serve - Vs. 2, Matt. 20:28, Matt. 25:40

We are living in a day when church members are infected with a worldly consumer mentality. It's not "What can I do to serve?" It's usually "How can the church serve me? What does it have for my kids, what does it have that makes me feel warm and fuzzy?" Of all the areas in which the modern church needs revival, more than anything I think we need a revival of Christian service to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said in Matt. 20:28, "even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve." And Jesus taught that the way that we serve Him is by serving others. He said in Matt. 25:40 "And the King

will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

III. We Are To Sing - vs. 3, John 10:26-27

God says, "I want you to be happy!" Look around at the other people. Do they look happy? Did they sing and praise with joy? If some people are happy, they need to tell their face about it!

Calvin Miller wrote "I have never forgotten that Daystar began his Great Insurrection by frowning and skipping his morning Alleluias. It must have seemed minor at the time, but hell grows out of paradise gone sour. Joy is a discipline, and fallen angels were always those who grew negligent with their praise."

IV. We Are To Submit - vs. 2b, John 10:26-27

Too many times today we have the Sheep going their own way regardless of the leadership of the Shepherd. We also have many in the church that are not sheep but are goats. Jesus was saying in John 10 that His sheep know Him and follow Him. In other words, they submit to Him as Lord. This is what the Psalmist said when he plainly stated: "Know that the Lord is God." Don't be stubborn like the battleship. One of the ways we do that is recognize that we are not God and He is.

V. We Are To Make Supplications - vs. 4, John 10:26-27, 1 Tim. 2:1, Ps. 116:17, Ps. 103:10

Every day we need to be in God's throne room with, as Paul told young Timothy in 1 Tim. 2:1, "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people." Like a high priest entering into the Most Holy Place and into the very presence of God, for Christians, prayer is first and foremost the time that we come into God's presence to enjoy holy fellowship with Him. In prayer, you not only praise God for Who He is, but also for what He has done. It is a time to thank Him for all His blessings. The Psalmist said, I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord." (Ps. 116:17). One pastor put it this way: "What if God treated us as we so often treat Him? The Psalmist declared "O Lord, help us to be thankful that you do not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities" (Ps. 103:10)