

Thanksgiving 2020



One of my early memories of Thanksgiving comes from my elementary school years. About the time I was in third or fourth grade, we were given the opportunity to decorate the bulletin board for each month. I don't remember if I volunteered or was chosen, but I remember being given the task of decorating the classroom bulletin board for November. Thanksgiving! The tools for the task were fairly basic: various colors of construction paper were available, along with scissors, crayons and a stapler with which to tack it all to the board. I remember working with various colors of paper to put in place a blue sky, brown for the ground, and cutting out from red the shape of a farmer to be at work in his field. Now, given my desire to present a construction-paper man who was anatomically correct I made sure to provide a nose for his face. Unfortunately, it was that particular detail which made it look like my bulletin board field was being plowed under by a redbird instead of a man!

One other element of that bulletin board was my attempt at portraying a cornucopia of the fruit and vegetables which had been harvested by my "redbird farmer." Trust me, it looked nothing like the picture above. In point of fact, the entire bulletin board ending up looking nothing like I had originally pictured in my mind. The very thing I had been so excited about doing had become in reality something of an embarrassment to me... especially as I had to explain to more than a few of my classmates why there was a bird plowing the field! All through November that year I wished the month would be over quickly and someone else's bulletin board would be there for everyone to see instead. In short, I was anything but "thankful" for the opportunity I had been given to express myself creatively; my disposition had turned sour, rather than "thankful."

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, 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 steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

-Psalm 100

It seems to me this can happen to us so often in life. We get excited about a particular opportunity, visualize what we anticipate it to be, but when the reality does not match our expectations, we become sad, frustrated, embarrassed, discouraged or even angry. It's times like this when we need to take the time to calm our spirits and count our blessings. If we begin by responding to God's call to "be still and know that I am God" and then take inventory of the myriad

blessings to be found in every day, then ultimately praise and thanksgiving appropriate to the One who holds us in the hollow of his hands will flow from lips and our hearts.

Like the cornucopia pictured above, our lives overflow with the bounty of God's goodness; even in a time of pandemic, grief, fear, illness, or loss, we discover the hope of therapeutic treatments and the development of safe and effective vaccines, the love and support of a community of faith, as well as family and friends, the comfort of God's presence, especially in the most difficult of moments and days, and we discover again that our lives do indeed overflow with the bounty of God's goodness. Each new day presents us with the opportunity to give praise and glory to God for all of life's goodness and blessings: life, family, friends, community, church, opportunities for service and fulfillment. In every season and situation of life we can "enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise." We can "give thanks to him" and "bless his name. For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations."

By His Grace,

Pastor Tom