

“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. *His love endures forever.* Give thanks to the God of gods. *His love endures forever.* Give thanks to the Lord of lords: *His love endures forever.*”  
(Psalm 136:1-3 NIV)

When we think of November most people will immediately think of Thanksgiving Day. We begin to think of certain weather conditions, falling leaves, football games, and especially food. Lots and lots of food.

The first thanksgiving celebrated by the pilgrims in this country was quite different. That first thanksgiving was first and foremost a thankfulness for survival. Many settlers died of scurvy and malnutrition during their horrible first winter. Of the 102 original Mayflower passengers only 44 survived to celebrate in the fall of 1621.

As our country grew and matured so did our understanding of thanksgiving. By 1789 the country observed a thanksgiving declared by George Washington who wrote in part:

“that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions, to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually, to render our national government a blessing to all the people, by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed, to protect and guide all Sovereigns and Nations (especially such as have shown kindness unto us) and to bless them with good government, peace, and concord. To promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the encrease of science among them and Us, and generally to grant unto all Mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as he alone knows to be best.”

In 1863, in the midst of the civil war, Abraham Lincoln found these humbling words as he proclaimed a thanksgiving celebration:

“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, tranquility and Union.”

When we look back at the history of thanksgiving we can see that our emphasis today is much different. May we once again see thanksgiving as a time to humble ourselves, confess our sinfulness, and give thanks to God whose love endures forever.

Happy Thanksgiving,

Pastor Tim