

“We Drink From Our Own Wells”

Sermon for First Christian Church of Decatur, Georgia

Thanksgiving Sunday, November 24, 2013

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Holy Scriptures: Isaiah 12

Thanksgiving and Praise

You will say in that day:

I will give thanks to you, O Lord,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
and you comforted me.

2 Surely God is my salvation;

I will trust, and will not be afraid,
for the Lord God is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.

3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

4 And you will say in that day:

Give thanks to the Lord,

call on his name;

make known his deeds among the nations;

proclaim that his name is exalted.

5 Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously;

let this be known in all the earth.

6 Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,

for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

May your thanksgiving become a living testimony

The first American Thanksgiving did not occur in 1621

when a group of Pilgrims shared a feast with a group of Native Americans.

The first recorded thanksgiving took place in Virginia

more than 11 years earlier, and it was not what many consider a feast.

The winter of 1610 at Jamestown

had reduced a group of 409 settlers to 60.

The survivors prayed for help,

without knowing when or how help might come.

When help did arrive in the form of a ship from England

filled with food and supplies, a prayer meeting was held

to give thanks to God.

(“Today in the Word”, July, 1990, p. 22.)

Prayer meetings are good places to gather to give thanks to God.

Scottish minister Alexander Whyte was known

for his uplifting prayers in the pulpit.

He always found something for which to be grateful.

One Sunday morning the weather was so gloomy

that one church member thought to himself,

"Certainly the preacher won't think of anything

for which to thank the Lord on a wretched day like this."

Much to his surprise, however, Whyte began by praying,

"We thank Thee, O God, that it is not always like this."

(“Daily Bread”,
August 26, 1989.)

May your thanksgiving become a living testimony

Our personal experiences of salvation inspire us to give thanks.

There is a difference between motivation and inspiration.

When you seek to motivate someone,

you are hoping he or she will do what you want them to do.

When you seek to inspire someone,

you are hoping that he or she will do what they are called to do.

Your personal experience of the salvation of God can inspire.

Salvation from God is understood in two beautiful ways.

The first way we understand salvation is foundational.

Chapters three and four of the Gospel of John teach us that the

salvation God offers and provides is given to all people once and for all.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,

that whoever believes in him

should not perish but have eternal life.

For God sent the Son into the world,

not to condemn the world,

but that the world might be saved through him.” (John 3:16-17)

Through the grace of God the whole people of God are saved, forever and ever.

Amen.

The gift of salvation has at its roots the love of God for creation.

The One who created and creates

has a will for saving and claiming all those who are made in God's image.

This is good news, indeed.

Jesus Christ loves you, and wants you to be in His circle.

Be grateful for the saving love of Christ.

May your thanksgiving become a living testimony

So, first we receive salvation as a foundational tenet of the Christian faith.

Secondly we recognize that God's salvation is a process as well as a destination.

Think of salvation as not as much being "saved" as "saving".

Salvation is an ongoing, ever-engaging, life-changing process.

As an example, my mother Buffy Calvert says that couples don't get married;

couples are continually marrying each other;

marriage is ever-changing and growing and evolving.

In the same way, we are not saved by Christ's love

as much as Christ is continually saving us, loving us,
changing us,

calling us to serve and give and live fully

into whom we are meant to be and
share.

Salvation is not something that happens at baptism and is
then over.

Salvation is not a one and done moment in life.

"Say, Bobbie Mae, have you been saved?"

*"Yessiree, Bubba, I've been saved, and that's it. Got my
ticket stamped for heaven."*

Disciples of Christ recognize that God's gift of salvation

is not like getting a passport stamped

or luggage decorated with a sticker that says
heaven.

Jesus' disciples rejoice that God is continually saving us.

We give thanks that God is active and involved in our daily
lives.

I celebrate and give thanks that I have been born again...

and born again ...and born again... and born again...

May your thanksgiving become a living testimony.

There is a fantastic, grace-filled biblical precedent
and experiential evidence for this loving theology.

The prophet Isaiah testifies to the people of Israel
that we experience salvation daily.

Daily.

Every day.

Every hour.

Every moment in the sun, with family and friends, in the
community and in the world.

Isaiah testifies because he and his neighbors

were blessed with sacred moments of direction,
comfort, provision,

reassurance and transformation, and so much
more.

We, too, can testify of moments and experiences

when we have been felt the touch of God's hand

and seen the evidence of Christ's footprints in
the sands of our lives

as we have been provided for,

guided and directed,

comforted and soothed,

reassured and
encouraged,

changed and

transformed

into a
new being in
Christ.

May your thanksgiving become a living testimony

We can relate to Isaiah because we, too, can testify and bear witness

that the saving grace of God is alive in the world.

God is still speaking.

God is still sustaining.

God is still saving.

This is good news, indeed.

Isaiah saw God's saving power in his own past, saying,

“You will say in that day: I will give thanks to you, O Lord,

for though you were angry with me,

your anger turned away, and you comforted me.”

Isaiah envisioned God's salvation in the future, as well, saying,

“Surely God is my salvation;

I will trust, and will not be afraid.”

Isaiah looked around and saw God in the present.

He observed that in the current context

of his family and friends, community and temple, God was present.

He said, *“The Lord God is my strength and my might;*

God has become my salvation.

With joy [I] draw water from the wells of salvation.”

Drink deep from the Living Water of Jesus Christ.

Draw Living Water from the wells of salvation,

overflowing with an abundance of grace and mercy,

of sustaining power and
strength.

It is never too late or too early to say yes to Jesus,

to open your eyes and life to the saving, redeeming
power of God.

This love is always here, always present, always loving you.

Trust that you can draw deeply from the well of God’s love.

Anytime.

Anywhere.

Drink deeply, and give thanks.

May your thanksgiving become a living testimony.

There are a variety of spiritual expressions of joy and rejoicing in the Holy Scriptures.

You know, feel free to claim one or more for your own soul,
for your own offerings of joy and thanksgiving.

The Apostle Paul said, *“Rejoice always, pray constantly, and in all things give thanks.”*

The Prophet Jeremiah encouraged people to make known what God is doing:

“Therefore, [said the Lord,] I am surely going to teach them,

this time I am going to teach them my power and my might,

and they shall know that my name is the Lord.” (16:21)

In Psalm 118, the Psalmist led the choir to sing, proclaiming,

“O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;

his steadfast love endures forever!

Let Israel say,

“His steadfast love endures forever.”

Let the house of Aaron say,

“His steadfast love endures forever.”

Let those who fear the Lord say,

“His steadfast love endures forever.”

Out of my distress I called on the Lord;

the Lord answered me and set me free.”

In Leviticus the Levite priests set down in the Law of Moses instructions

for bringing offerings of thanksgiving for the forgiving grace of God.

“Let this be known; point out to others what God is doing.”

Rest assured that we need not bring a goat to the altar as instructed by Leviticus.

We will leave it to those who loudly and proudly proclaim that they follow the “inerrant” word of God.

The Levite priests’ wisdom, however, is still relevant.

Bring to God your life as it is, broken and hurting and in need of healing,

and tithe your burdens and sins and errors of your

ways.

As you depart from the Table of the Lord

give thanks for the gift of being released and relieved
and redeemed.

Isaiah walked in the streets and sat at kitchen tables

and stood up in the temple of God and said,

“Give thanks to the Lord, call on [God’s] name;

make known [God’s] deeds among the nations;

proclaim and exalt [God’s name].

5 Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously;

let this be known in all the earth.

6 Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,

for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

“Great in your midst is the Holy One.”

This is good news, indeed.

Why do these things?

Well, the faith we affirm is that

we have experienced God’s presence in our lives,

or we haven’t and hope to someday,

or we encountered the holy in our past

and would very much like to
revive the relationship.

May your thanksgiving become a living testimony.

Two men were walking through a field one day when they spotted an enraged bull.

Instantly they darted toward the nearest fence.

The storming bull followed in hot pursuit,

and it was soon apparent they wouldn't make it.

Terrified, the one shouted to the other, *“Put up a prayer, John. We're in for it!”*

John answered, *“I can't. I've never made a public prayer in my life.”*

“But you must!” implored his companion. *“The bull is catching up to us.”*

“All right,” panted John, *“I'll say the only prayer I know, the one my father used to repeat at the table:*

‘O Lord, for what we are about to receive, make us truly thankful.’”

May your thanksgiving become a living testimony

Drink deep from the Living Water of Jesus Christ.

And be grateful. Your gratitude will inspire a generation.

We'll give our beloved Fred Craddock the last word.

Dr. Craddock said, “[*Above all, I urge you to be grateful.*]

Of all the virtues, if I could have selected just one for my children,

I would have asked God to make them grateful.

People who are genuinely grateful are never greedy or jealous,

never bitter or small; not self-centered or hateful.

If they are able to see every day as a gift from God

and see what they have not as their own,

but as what God has given them for a while,

they are what we call gracious people.

To be gracious, you must first be grateful. I hope that you are grateful.”

All power be to the Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen!