

The Work of Thanksgiving

Preached: 11/21/2021, Germantown;
Thanksgiving and Anniversary Sunday

- **Shoebox Report:** We collected 70 Shoeboxes for Operation Christmas child. In addition, My Favorite Place Daycare has added 135 boxes to our 70, with the hope of filling even more boxes. We say Thank You to all who donated boxes. Please continue to pray for the boxes, their journey and the children who will receive them.
- **150 years:** This Sunday we are recognizing the 150th anniversary of our Church. In 1871 Elder Samuel Spurrier from nearby Friends Creek Church led a series of revival meetings in this Community. 40 people were converted to faith in Jesus. Their lives were changed. Following the Revival services, they formed a Church which became the Germantown Church of God. This Church has been faithful in ministry since that time. Many more lives have been changed over the years as more people came to faith in Jesus. Germantown Church has always been passionate about communicating the good news of the Gospel of Jesus in our community. But we have also supported those who are working around the world to make Jesus known. We are grateful for all that God has done through the ministry of this Church.

150 years is a milestone worth celebrating. Unfortunately due to the concerns about the COVID pandemic we have decided to observe this anniversary in a low-key manner. We won't be having a large celebration with special services and a Party. But it is a milestone that we want to acknowledge. I have invited members of the congregation to share stories or testimonies of how their lives have been impacted by the ministry of our Church. We will celebrate with music, enjoying some of our favorite hymns.

Recently we have stated a mission statement for our Church. While the written statement is recent, I believe that the sentiment addressed in the statement has defined who we are. Over the years our ministry has been guided by a philosophy of ministry. ***"Germantown Church of God exists for the purpose of moving people who are broken – spiritually, physically, emotionally, or relationally into the presence of Jesus where they can find healing and be transformed into His image."*** That will continue to be our purpose.

These last two years have presented challenges for us as individuals and as a Church. COVID has impacted many lives. It is our prayer that the impact of COVID will begin to diminish, and we will be able to move into a new season of ministry. I hope that you will choose to be a part of this new season for our Church.

The Thanksgiving Holiday

Next Thursday is the Thanksgiving Holiday. It is a reminder to us as a nation to give thanks to God for His hand of favor and blessing on our country. Throughout the early days of history in our country, the earliest settlers periodically set aside time and days to give thanks God. They had come to this new world, to escape religious persecution in their European homelands. Their early days in this new country were difficult. They experienced sickness, hunger, and other dangers. Many of the early arrivals did not survive. But as they struggled, they trusted in God to help them. And He did. They were not negligent in giving thanks to God for His help.

As the nation grew and became an independent nation, presidents and leaders have been convinced that God was blessing this land. Days were designated Thanksgiving. Eventually the 4th Thursday in November was designated as Thanksgiving Day to be observed every year. Thanksgiving Day has evolved and become many things, but first and foremost its purpose is to recognize that our blessings have come from God and it is appropriate to give thanks to Him.

For Christians the act of giving Thanks to God has always been important to our faith journey and worship of God. The Scriptures are filled with commands and challenges to Thank the Lord. When David was king of Israel it was his desire to not only lead the nation politically, but also spiritually. He formed teams of singers whose sole work was to sing and lead others in worship. We read a Psalm of Thanksgiving that they sang in 1 Chronicles 16. I would like to read a portion of that song.

Scripture

1 Chronicles 16:8-14; 28-36

Message:

The Work of Thanksgiving

I suppose that we would agree that we shouldn't have to be reminded to be thankful. When someone does something for us, or gives us a gift, it should be a natural response to express our gratitude. Parents model gratitude for their children and remind them "What do you say?" until a child does not have to be reminded again. As we hear the words of this song, we learn some things about giving Thanks. Thanksgiving is more than just uttering the words "Thank You." I believe sincere Thanksgiving is an act of worship that should change our hearts. What does Thanksgiving accomplish? I've identified a few attitudes or behaviors that are produced when we are thankful

- Giving thanks forces us to **reflect on the character of God**. What is this God like who blesses our lives? The Psalm recites characteristics that teach us who God is:
 - He is Holy
 - He is great – above all other objects of people's devotion
 - He is surrounded by majesty
- Giving Thanks forces us to remember that **He is the source of our blessings**. Many people are under this mistaken impression that it is by their hard work and efforts that they have what they do. But this Psalm tells us that GOD is our Provider. "**Remember the wonders HE has done**" We are dependent on Him. It is a constant temptation to forget God's provision. The apostle Paul tells us that when we become negligent in our Thankfulness, we will begin to focus more on creation, rather than the Creator.
- Giving Thanks forces us to realize how rich we are. Right now in our country our economy is struggling. Prices are rising. And yet compared to 90% of the world's population, we are exceedingly rich. As we reflect on all that we have, we are reminded of the poverty of others. We should then be challenged to share with them. Our riches are an opportunity to bless others.
- Giving Thanks forces us to Reaffirm our faith and trust in God. "**Look to the Lord and His strength; seek His face always**" (vs. 11). When we understand all that God has done for us, we cannot be unresponsive to Him. He has loved us and longs for us to love Him in return.
- Giving Thanks forces us to be a witness to others. "**Declare His glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all the people.**" When we are giving thanks, we want others to know God and join us in worshiping Him.

So giving Thanks is an Act of worship that changes us. It changes our heart. It changes our relationship with God. It changes our relationship to others. It changes our relationship with our possessions. If it doesn't change us, we must question if our Thanksgiving is sincere. .

What are you Thankful for this year? I encourage you to make a list. Write it down and record any changes that you need to make in your thinking and attitudes because of the way God has blessed you.