

Thankfulness

Rev. K. M Varughese, Pastor – IPC Hebron, Los Angeles

*"Thanksgiving is the key
For His blessings to increase,
If we've not got thankful hearts,
His blessings soon will cease" (M. S. Lowndes)*

Thankfulness is a prominent Bible theme. It should be way of life for us, naturally flowing from our hearts. Psalms 136 is a psalm used in the ancient Jewish worship as they ascended the hill to the temple. It was associated very closely with the festival of Passover celebrating Jewish release from the slavery of Egypt. This psalm breaks down into four separate sections that each has a separate specific theme.

1. The true one God 136:1-6
2. The creator God 136:4-9
3. God who is interested and active in history of man 136:10-22
4. God who cares and provides 136:23-26

Thankfulness is the expression of a grateful heart. Always start and end your day with a thankful heart. If you feel hard to practice it please read the following quotes.

"The happiest people do not have the best of everything. They make the best of everything they have. "

"Gratitude is not only the greatest of all virtues, but the parent of all others." (Cicero)

"We pray for the big things and forget to thank for the ordinary gifts." (Dietrich Hoeffer)

"We would worry less if we praised more." (H. A. Ironside)

"Rest and be thankful." (William Wordsworth)

The Bible asks us to be "Joyful always, pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1Thess. 5:16-18).

A Brief History of Thanksgiving

In September 1620, a small ship called the Mayflower left Plymouth, England, carrying 102 passengers—an assortment of religious separatists seeking a new home where they could freely practice their faith and other individuals lured by the promise of prosperity and land ownership in the New World. After a treacherous and uncomfortable crossing that lasted 66 days, they dropped anchor near the tip of Cape Cod, far north of their intended destination at the mouth of the Hudson River. One month later, the Mayflower crossed Massachusetts Bay, where the Pilgrims, as they are now commonly known, began the work of establishing a village at Plymouth. Throughout that first brutal winter, most of the colonists remained on board the ship, where they suffered from exposure, scurvy and outbreaks of contagious disease. Only half of the Mayflower's original passengers and crew lived to see their first New England spring. In March, the remaining settlers moved ashore, where they received an astonishing visit from an Abenaki Indian who greeted them in English. Several days later, he returned with another Native American, Squanto, a member of the Pawtuxet tribe who had been kidnapped by an English sea captain and sold into slavery before escaping to London and returning to his homeland on an exploratory expedition. Squanto taught the Pilgrims, weakened by malnutrition and illness, how to cultivate corn, extract sap from maple trees, catch fish in the rivers and avoid poisonous plants. He also helped the settlers forge an alliance with the Wampanoag, a local tribe, which would endure for more than 50 years and tragically remains one of the sole examples of harmony between European colonists and Native Americans.

In November 1621, after the Pilgrims' first corn harvest proved successful, Governor William Bradford organized a celebratory feast and invited a group of the fledgling colony's Native American allies, including the Wampanoag chief Massasoit. Now remembered as America's "first Thanksgiving"—although the Pilgrims themselves may not have used the term at the time—the festival lasted for three days.

Later, during the American Revolution, the Continental Congress designated one or more days of thanksgiving a year, and in 1789 George Washington issued the first Thanksgiving proclamation by the national government of the United States; in it, he called upon Americans to express their gratitude for the happy conclusion to the country's war of independence and the successful ratification of the U.S. Constitution.

In 1827, the noted magazine editor and prolific writer Sarah Josepha Hale—author, launched a campaign to establish Thanksgiving as a national holiday, which was then not very popular in the Southern states. For 36 years, she published numerous editorials and sent scores of letters to governors, senators, presidents and other politicians.

Abraham Lincoln finally heeded her request in 1863, at the height of the Civil War, in a proclamation entreating all Americans to ask God to "commend to his tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife" and to "heal the wounds of the nation." He scheduled Thanksgiving for the final Thursday in November, and it was celebrated on that day every year until 1939, when Franklin D. Roosevelt moved the holiday up a week in an attempt to spur retail sales during the Great Depression. Roosevelt's plan, known derisively as 'Franksgiving', was met with passionate opposition, and in 1941 the president reluctantly signed a bill making Thanksgiving the fourth Thursday in November.

Ten Reasons Christians Should Not Celebrate Halloween *by J. Kerby Anderson*

Compilation: Robin Tim David, Editor - Church Monthly Bulletin

Many in our secular society believe Halloween is nothing more than a harmless festival that allows kids to collect candy. But is it? Its origins lie deeply rooted in the occult, and Christians should stay away. Here are ten reasons why.

1. *October 31st has long been known as "The Festival of the Dead." The Celtic tribes and their priests the Druids celebrated this day as a marker for the change from life to death*
2. *Halloween today is performed usually by adherents of witchcraft who use the night for their rituals. Witches celebrate Halloween as the "Feast of Samhain," the first feast of the witchcraft year. Being a festival of the dead, Halloween is a time when witches attempt to communicate with the dead through various forms of divination.*
3. *Christians should not be involved with occultic practice or divination (Deuteronomy 18).*
4. *Occultists believe Halloween is a time of transition between life and death. Some occult practitioners practiced divination and believed you could learn the secrets of life and wisdom by lying on a grave and listening to the messages from the long-departed.*
5. *Occultists also taught that spirits and ghosts left the grave during this night and would seek out warmth in their previous homes. Villagers, fearful of the possibility of being visited by the ghosts of past occupants, would dress up in costumes to scare the spirits on their way. They would also leave food and other treats at their door to appease the spirits so they would not destroy their homes or crops but instead move on down the road. That is the real reason why kids dress up in costumes today and go door-to-door seeking treats.*
6. *Occultists also would try to scare away the spirits by carving a scary face into a pumpkin. This horrible visage would hopefully move the spirit on to another home or village and spare that home from destruction. Sometimes the villagers would light a candle and place it within the pumpkin and use it as a lantern (hence the name, Jack-o-Lantern). This is the origin of carving pumpkins at Halloween.*
7. *In some witchcraft covens, the closing ritual includes eating an apple or engaging in fertility rites. In the Bible (Genesis 3), eating a piece of fruit brought sin and death into the world. In witchcraft, eating an apple is symbolic of bringing life. The practice of bobbing for apples brings together two pagan traditions: divination and the fertility ritual.*
8. *Schools are removing any religious significance from Christmas (often called winter break) and Easter (spring break). Isn't it ironic that most public schools still celebrate Halloween even though it has occultic origins?*
9. *Participating in Halloween gives sanction to a holiday that promotes witches, divination, haunted houses, and other occultic practices*
10. *Christians should avoid Halloween and develop creative alternatives. Churches can hold a Fall Fun Festival and/or celebrate Reformation Day (also October 31). They should not endorse or promote Halloween.*

Friends! During this thanksgiving month, let us also be thankful that our **Christ holds the "keys to death and Hades" (Revelation 1:18), and take comfort in the fact that Christ defeated death.**

Even the mere name of "Jesus Christ" can make evil shutter and even follow the commands of God. When Jesus confronted evil demons in the New Testament they were fearful and obeyed the commands of Jesus to leave the people they possessed.

Much of the outcry concerning Halloween comes from the fear of evil or welcoming evil into their homes or lives. We, believers of Christ should take comfort in knowing that Jesus has given us the tools to fend away all the evil: faith in God, scripture, the power of Christ, the Holy Spirit, fasting, and prayer.

Wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving!