

Remember the LORD your God

- I. For the gifts he's given you
- II. For the journey he's brought you through
- III. For the slavery he's freed you from

*<sup>10</sup> When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. <sup>11</sup> Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. <sup>12</sup> Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, <sup>13</sup> and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, <sup>14</sup> then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. <sup>15</sup> He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. <sup>16</sup> He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. <sup>17</sup> You may say to yourself, My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me. <sup>18</sup> But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.*

Tell me, what does Thanksgiving mean to you? Is it a big Butterball turkey? Or maybe this year it's a ham. Or a goose. Or some grilled duck breasts on the side. For you, maybe it means stuffing—do you like it with raisins or without? And how about the veggies? Will it be green bean casserole with the fried onions on top? Or is it buttery corn or maybe glazed carrots with brown sugar and cinnamon? Or how about the cranberries? Do you like them lumpy or do you like them smooth like I do, right out of the can? And let's not forget the pie. Is it going to be pumpkin pie with a little whipped cream on it? Or maybe apple pie or pecan pie? (Is anyone's mouth watering yet?) Or maybe for you, Thanksgiving means more than food. Maybe for you, Thanksgiving means family. It's a chance to spend time with the cousins. Maybe catch up with an aunt or uncle. Maybe Thanksgiving means watching the football game or checking out the Black Friday ads, or heading out to the deer stand, or playing cards. What will it be at your house? Will it be Sheepshead or Euchre? (If you come to the Meyer's for Thanksgiving, you can count on someone playing 500.) These are just a few of the things that Thanksgiving might mean to you.

And yet, I have to say that there is one more thing that Thanksgiving must mean for each of you. Apparently for you, Thanksgiving means coming here, to God's house, for a special worship service. Why is that? I mean, you realize God never commanded that the Christian Church set aside the fourth Thursday in November as a national holiday. No, the United States government established this holiday. And yet here we are, gathered not in a courtroom or a state house. We're here in church. Why is that?

The answer is obvious, isn't it? We are here because Thanksgiving means more than being thankful for something. It also means being thankful to Someone. For you and me,

Thanksgiving means being thankful to The Giver of every good and perfect gift. For you and me, Thanksgiving is about being thankful to God. And yet, as obvious as that connection between God and Thanksgiving is, the fact is, it's easy to overlook it. It's easy to get so wrapped up in celebrating all the things associated with Thanksgiving that we lose sight of the one who gave them in the first place, especially when those blessings are as abundant as they are.

But you see, that's why Moses words to the nation of Israel some 3500 years ago are still applicable to you and me today. Just like us, the Children of Israel faced the challenge of losing sight of God in the midst of all of God's blessings. And so, what Moses said to them still applies to you and me today. Moses' advice is simply this,

Remember the Lord your God!

- I. Remember him for the gifts he has given you
- II. Remember him for the journey he's brought you through
- III. Remember him for the slavery he's freed you from

First, remember him for the gifts he has given you, especially at Thanksgiving. I mean, doesn't that sound like what Moses is talking about in the opening words of our text? Moses says to the children of Israel, "*When you have eaten and are satisfied . . .*". In other words, when you finally push yourself away from the dinner table and say, "Man, I'm more stuffed than a Thanksgiving turkey," When you've eaten and are satisfied, then what? Moses says, then, "*Praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.*"

Obviously, Moses is referring to the promised land of Canaan, which the Children of Israel would soon be occupying. Moses describes that land in the verses immediately preceding our text. He says, "*For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.*"

Those words could just as easily be applied to the land we live in, couldn't they? When you think of all the really barren and desolate places in the world, places where people can barely eek out an existence, living hand-to-mouth, and you compare that to the land we live in—there really is no comparison. We're living in the land of milk and honey, a land with plenty of water and forests and fertile fields. A land where transportation is easy and communication is in the palm of our hands. A land where our homes are heated, our toilets flush, our Lay-z-boy's recline, and our TV's and computers provide us with a non-stop stream of information and entertainment. Compared to so many places in the world, we are living in the lap of luxury. As inhabitants of the United States of America, we are truly blessed by God.

And yet, along with all these blessings, there comes a very real danger—both the people in Moses' day and still today. Moses issues the warning. "*When you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God.*"

Tell me, are those words only for the Children of Israel? Or could they just as easily apply to you and me today? "*When you build find houses and settle down. When all you have is multiplied.*" I don't know about you, but when I look in my closet, all I see is shirt after shirt after shirt and suit after suit after suit. When I look around my house and see that I don't have one TV. No, I have four TVs! When I look in the garage, I see that I don't have one fishing pole. I have...well I've lost count. As Moses puts it, "*all I have is multiplied.*"

Now don't misunderstand. Moses isn't condemning anyone for having an abundance of material possessions. No, what Moses is doing is pointing out is that along with an abundance of material possessions comes the temptation to take some credit for all those possessions. How does Moses put it? *"You may say to yourself, my power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."* Or as we might say today, "I worked hard for what I have. I pinched my pennies. I made my money the old-fashioned way, 'I earned it.'" But what does Moses say? *"Remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth."*

Isn't that the truth? Who of us created our own brain, or formed our own fingers, or molded our own lips that allow us to do the work for which we are paid? Thanksgiving is a time to give credit where credit is due. "God, thank you for the ability to work. God, thank you for an opportunity to invest the talents you've given me. Thank you for giving me a job, be it now or in years past, as a way to channel material wealth in to my hands, so that I can afford to buy a Thanksgiving dinner, or drive to Grandma's house, or purchase a can of green beans." When it comes right down to it, everything we have, everything we own, everything we are able to do, is all a gracious gift from God. And Thanksgiving, more than any other day of the year, is a day to remember that. Remember the Lord your God, for the gifts he's given you.

And yet, if you think about it, Thanksgiving is far more than thanking God for all the stuff (and all the stuffing) he's given us to enjoy. Really, Thanksgiving is time to step back and look at a much bigger picture. Thanksgiving is a time to not only: Remember the Lord your God I. for the gifts he's given you. It's also a time to: II. Remember the Lord your God for the journey he's brought you through.

Here in our text, Moses is concerned that the children of Israel are going to forget about God, once they enter the Promised Land and start enjoying the good life. And so, to try to counter that temptation, Moses points them to a much more difficult time in their lives and reminds them of how God brought them through that time as well. Moses says, *"The Lord your God...brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known."*

In other words, "Israel, don't forget what your God has brought you through. Remember how he protected you from the dangers of the desert. He literally fed you with bread from Heaven. He miraculously quenched your thirst with water from a rock." And even though their 40 year journey through the wilderness was no walk in the park, even though there were times when it was downright hard, still, God used those difficult days to serve a good purpose. Moses tells Israel that God allowed those difficult days to do what? Moses says that they were *"to humble and test you, that in the end it might go well with you."* Right? Even those trials served a good purpose.

My friends, isn't the same thing true for you and me today? I'll bet that if you look back on your life, you can all think of some difficult days that the Lord has brought you through. Maybe it was a health issue, or a family crisis. Maybe was a financial setback or the loss of a loved one. Something that was hard, something that put your faith to the test, but something that the Lord brought you through safely, so that now on this Thanksgiving, you can take to heart Moses' words to...Remember the Lord your God—not only for the gifts he's given you, but also II. For the journey that he's brought you through.

And yet there's one more thing you can join the nation of Israel in remembering the Lord

for. You can Remember the Lord your God III. For the slavery he's freed you from.

Certainly, that's one of the things that was on Moses' mind. He pleads with Israel to not forget "*the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*" Again, couldn't those same words be spoken to you and me? Just as the Lord rescued Israel from the slavery of the Egyptians, so also that same God as rescued us from the slavery of sin. He has set us free from the fear of death. He's cut off the shackles that Satan once had on us. Satan can't tell us what to do anymore. In Christ, you and I have been set free! We are now free to live our lives not to merely please ourselves, but free to live our lives for God, free to serve one another in love, free to manage the gifts God has given us in a way that will ultimately have an impact on people's eternal lives.

If you think about it, isn't that what Thanksgiving is all about? Yes, it's a chance to enjoy some great food and time with those we love. But more than that, it's a chance to step back and appreciate the big picture. God has been so good, so gracious. He's given us so much more than we deserve—not only in this life, but even more so, in the one to come. As you take time to count your blessings this Thanksgiving, remember where they come from. You and I didn't earn a single thing we have. They are all gifts from the hands of a gracious God.

And even if our tables are not overflowing this year, even if the family is not all united around the table, even if we are facing some really tough times this Thanksgiving, be assured that the same God who has brought us this far, will see us through to the end, when by God's grace, through faith in Jesus, he'll welcome us into the true Promised Land of heaven. God keep us grateful to him, for all he's given us for time and for eternity, for Jesus's sake. Amen.