

It is Wise to Give Thanks VOC 13/10/13
Proverbs 15: 16, 17.1

Hello Dear Listeners;

Tomorrow is a special day in this Canada of ours! It is Thanksgiving Day. Although it wasn't until 1957 that Canada's Parliament fixed Thanksgiving as the second Monday in October yet the history of Thanksgiving in Canada can be traced back a lot further than that! It even pre-dates the event that Americans commonly call the "First Thanksgiving" That was celebrated by what are called the Pilgrims after their first harvest in the New World in 1621. For Thanksgiving in Canada can be traced back to the 1578 voyage of Martin Frobisher from England who was searching for the Northwest passage. Though some of Frobisher's ships were lost and their expedition was plagued by ice and freak storms they finally did anchor in what we now know as Frobisher Bay in the present Canadian Territory of Nunavut.

It was there that "Mayster Wolfall" a learned and godly man appointed by the British Crown to be their minister and preacher is said to have made them " a *godly sermon*" exhorting them to give thanks to God for their deliverance from the elements in dangerous places. Then they celebrated holy Communion.

Years later French settlers who arrived in Canada with the explorer Champlain from 1604 onwards also held feasts of thanks, Students of Canada's history will know they formed the Order of Good Cheer and gladly shared their food with their First nations neighbours.

Canadians have every reason to give thanks to God for as the bible says emphatically, He is good; his love endures forever". (Psalm 107:1) We live in a prosperous free land where we enjoy many privileges and blessings. Indeed we are the envy of many others who live in places wracked by famine, instability and even terror. In not a few places Christians are being put to death and Christian churches destroyed!

Now there may be many in our country who don't look beyond having a holiday and perhaps carving a pumpkin or two. Yet Thanksgiving means realizing there is a God who in His providence has decided to bless us that we may be thankful to

Him. This being so, let us not just thank God with our words but honour God with our lives.

That's what Solomon who wrote so many of the Proverbs we started to explore last week desired we do when he says in chapter 15: 16, 17,

*Better is a little with the fear of the Lord
than great wealth with turmoil. better a meal of vegetables where there is love
than a fattened calf with hatred.*

Eugene H. Peterson, a modern-day pastor and poet paraphrased these verses this way,

*A simple life in the Fear-of-God is better than a rich life with a ton of
headaches. Better a bread crust shared in love than a slab of prime rib
served in hate.*

Someone has said that "Better is the believer's little than the unbeliever's lot". This is truly so! But then that "little" must be coupled with that "fear of the Lord" of which Solomon spoke. Such fear is not some kind of terror at the thought of a mighty God who might come down hard on people if they step out of line. No, this fear is rather the kind of which Solomon's father, king David says in Psalm 19 that it is "*pure, enduring forever.*" It is that kind of fear which causes a person to stand in awe of what God is able and willing to do.

A person may have little money, goods, possessions. Yet that person may have a continual feast! For with the Lord, there is life, even life that never ends. Peter, an apostle of the Lord who wrote some bible books speaks about Jesus' love and says, " His divine power has given us *everything we need* for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." (2 Peter 1:3).

Knowing that Lord and living your life close to him in awe and devotion, and by faith having a close personal relationship with him makes all the difference. Says Solomon in effect, a person may have to make weekly visits to the food bank or be dependent on the care of those in the church whose task it is to care for the poor yet even so that person may be very rich! Rich in the knowledge that there

is a God and Saviour. A Savior who has reserved for them the very best, the gift of eternal life with Him in heaven above as Peter would go on to say in 1 Peter 1:4.

Those who stand in awe of the Lord and his Word, and who rejoice in his good gifts with godly contentment trump even the richest person who is only out for more and more. Many are the examples in the bible as well as in the world today of those who have sought after wealth and have gained it but who did not only lose it in a flash but whose lives were eaten up with trouble and turmoil. Greed is a very bitter foe of happiness and godly joy. A wise person said the universe will not satisfy the ungodly while a little will suffice for a heavenly heart. The Preacher who wrote the book of Ecclesiastes said, “ *Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after wind.*” (Eccl. 4:6).

When I was a child I really didn't like vegetables. Yet my mother patiently kept at it insisting I eat at least some of those beans and carrots she put on my plate. She did so with much love. In fact the atmosphere I grew up in was saturated with love. Even during the war years when we had very little there was always an abundance of love. It made up for a lot of hunger and pain and even sorrow.

Yet how often isn't it the case that there where hatred and envy reside, there is only misery. Though there may be tables full of food and the wine flows liberally, there is really only hollowness when love is lacking. It is so, “ *Love sweetens the simplest of foods but hatred makes the richest feast bitter.*”

You find proof of this in the bible. How much more refreshing were the simple meals of the early Christians than the well-supplied tables of their (and God's) enemies. In the book of Acts, ch. 2 we read that those Christians,

Broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God.

It was known as an 'agape', or love feast. The more affluent saw to it that the poorest among them had enough. It was during those feasts that the church came to celebrate that special feast known as holy Communion or the Lord's Supper.

They remembered that Jesus Christ who is the wisdom of the world gave His life for the sins of all who believe.

Jesus Christ, who is the "light of the world" would have every one of our days be a Thanksgiving day. And it can be, in the way of faith in him, who gave his life for so many people's sins. Jesus Christ who even when he went back to heaven told his followers, his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit down to be with them, always!

And he did. And He, God the Holy Spirit is active in the midst of God's people. He is "The Lord and Giver of life" (Nicene Creed) Today, he continues to open his arms and he gathers his church and gives comfort and joy even in difficult circumstances. He makes it possible for you and me to give thanks in all circumstances as the bible says we must (1 Thessalonians 5:18). For his love and comfort is an ever-present gift!

In thankfulness for his gracious care, the outpouring of his love and the forgiveness of sins let us then give thanks. Let us do so by honoring his command that we worship him with reverence deep, in the fellowship of those who are united by a common faith in this living Lord.

The churches that sponsor this broadcast are far from perfect. Yet they have great care for the poor, not only in their own midst but for those elsewhere as well. They too on a regular basis are strengthened in their faith as they celebrate the Lord's Supper. Today is another Lord's day while tomorrow it is Thanksgiving. We invite you to come and to join us as we give thanks to God for the bounty of His loving care and for the freedom we have to serve him as his Word directs. That learning to believe and to trust in Jesus Christ you too may be truly happy and it may go well with you, today, tomorrow, and... forever. Amen and thanks so much for listening.