

25-1123p Transcript

25-1123p - A Thanksgiving of Biblical Proportions, Scott Reynolds
Bible Reader: John Nousek This transcript transcribed by TurboScribe.ai, (Detailed Summary by Grok, xAI)

See a detailed summary: [Detailed Summary HTML](#) - [Detailed Summary PDF](#)

A Thanksgiving of Biblical Proportions

Scripture Reading

Scripture Reader: (0:04 - 0:31) John Nousek, <i>Colossians 2:6-7 (NASB) - (0:04) Well, good evening. This is in Colossians chapter 2 and it's verses 6 and 7. (0:13) As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, (0:17) so walk in</i>	Scripture continued <i>him, brood in and build up in him, and establish in faith as you have been taught, (0:25) abounding in it with thanksgiving. Amen.(0:31)</i>
--	---

Transcript (0:04 - 34:42), Preacher: Scott Reynolds

(0:35) Good evening. Good to see everybody. (0:38) Tonight we're going to look at thanksgiving from a biblical lens, not exhaustively, (0:44) but at six aspects of thanksgiving from the scripture.

(0:48) Then we'll compare the biblical thanksgiving to our American thanksgiving tradition. (0:55) Every November, the cultural machinery revs up. Grocery aisles overflow with canned pumpkin, (1:03) television networks roll out football marathons, and elementary school children (1:09) glue colored feathers onto construction paper pilgrim hats.

(1:15) Thanksgiving, as most Americans express it or experience it, has become a warm, (1:22) sentimental, belly-focused holiday. There's nothing inherently wrong with any of that (1:30) until it becomes the whole story. Long before turkey and touchdowns, long before 1621 or 1863, (1:41) scripture laid out a vision of thanksgiving that is deeper, tougher, and infinitely more life-giving.

(1:48) The Bible refuses to reduce gratitude to a feeling that shows up when the bank account is healthy (1:56) and the family is functional. Instead, thanksgiving is a command, a doorway, a weapon, (2:06) a discipline, and ultimately a person. Thanksgiving is a command and not a feeling, number one.

(2:16) Paul writes to a young church under pressure, (2:20) Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God (2:27) and Christ Jesus for you. First Thessalonians 5, verses 16 through 18. Notice the triplet, (2:36) rejoice, pray, and give thanks.

Notice also the shocking modifier, in all circumstances, (2:44) not in pleasant circumstances, not when the biopsy comes back negative, (2:50) and not after the promotion, all means, all circumstances. This is one of the few places (2:58) in the New Testament where Paul explicitly says, here is God's will for you. We spend years trying (3:07) to discern God's will about our jobs, relationships, and locations, yet here it sits in (3:16) plain sight, give thanks, always.

The Greek verb is present imperative, which means keep on giving (3:26) thanks, no exceptions, no vacations. Number two, thanksgiving is a doorway into God's presence. (3:36) Psalm 100, verse 4, is deservedly famous, enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with (3:48) praise, give thanks to him, bless his name.

Imagine the temple court in Jerusalem, to walk through (3:57) the gates you had to bring something, a sacrifice, a song, a heart that remembered an unthankful (4:04) heart is locked outside, staring through the lattice. In the New Testament, the locations (4:15) change, but the principle does not. We no longer travel to Jerusalem, but we still enter the (4:24) presence of God.

The password has not changed, grumbling keeps you in the parking lot, gratitude (4:32) ushers you into the throne room. Number three, thanksgiving is positive in the worst seasons. (4:41) Habakkuk stands in a field that will yield nothing and declares, though the fig tree should not (4:49) blossom nor fruit beyond the vines, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will take joy in the God (4:56) of my salvation.

Habakkuk 3, verses 17 and 18. The prophet is not denying reality, he's denying (5:08) despair. His joy is not rooted in the harvest, but in the harvester.

The same defiant gratitude echoes (5:17) from a Roman prison cell when Paul writes, I have learned in whatever situation I am (5:26) to be content. Philippians 4, verse 11. Shipwrecks, beatings, hunger, and eventual execution (5:36) do not get the final word.

Christ does. Number four, thanksgiving is spiritual warfare. (5:46) Philippians 4, 6, and 7 is one of the most precious promises in scripture.

Do not be anxious (5:54) about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests (6:03) be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your (6:11) hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Anxiety and thanksgiving are mutually exclusive. One must (6:21) give ground when the other advances.

Every time we choose gratitude in the middle of uncertainty, (6:28) we are planting the flag that says the enemy does not own this territory. It's interesting (6:37) that the promise of peace comes in answer to do not be anxious. Number five, thanksgiving finds (6:49) its fullest expression at the table of the Lord.

The Greek word for the Lord's supper is (7:00) Eucharistia. Literally, it means thanksgiving. On the night he was betrayed, hours away from the (7:08) cross, Jesus took bread in the cup and gave thanks.

The greatest act of gratitude in human history (7:16) took place on the worst night in human history. That is the Christian pattern. We give thanks, (7:22) not because life is easy, but because redemption is finished.

Number six, (7:31) thanksgiving is the mark of true faith. Luke records the story of ten lepers in Luke 17, (7:39) verses 11 through 19. All ten are cleansed.

Nine sprint toward their old lives, clutching the gift (7:48) of cleanliness. One turns back, falls at Jesus' feet and thanks him. Jesus asks, (7:56) we're not ten cleansed.

Where are the nine? Then he says to the one, rise and go your way. (8:06) Your faith has made you well. The Greek is stronger.

It says your faith has saved you. (8:14) All ten experienced physical healing, but only one experienced a healing soul. (8:22) The difference was thanksgiving.

Here's a practical challenge. This year, before the (8:29) plates are passed and the games come on, try something radical. Open a Bible to Psalm 103 (8:37) or Colossians 3 and read aloud.

Then go around the table and have every person name one specific (8:44) mercy from the past year, especially one that came wrapped in pain. Watch what happens when (8:51) gratitude becomes deliberate, spoken, and directed to the giver rather than the gift. (8:59) The world will tell you to count your blessings.

The Bible says count them, yes, but count them (9:06) back to the one who gave them. If the only thing you possess tomorrow was what you thanked God for (9:14) today, how rich would you be? May the God who gave his son while we were still sinners teach (9:24) us to overflow with thanksgiving, not because life is easy, but because Christ is always enough. (9:33) Just an aside, Gene and I, we went to the Air Museum in Port Clinton, and they had a number of (9:45) exhibits where they were restoring aircraft.

And they were working on, actually they were working (9:54) on a PT boat. They had a sign there that said, we don't do this because it's easy. We do this (10:02) because we thought it was going to be easy.

That just brought that to mind. Not that it has (10:09) anything to do with the sermon. But let's look now at an American Thanksgiving.

(10:17) This Thursday, many of us will sit down to turkey and dressing and say something like, (10:23) I'm thankful for family, health, and this food. Thanksgiving is the most distinctly American (10:30) holiday. Yet, many Christians feel a quiet unease about it.

The unease is warranted. (10:41) Somewhere between the Pilgrim's Harvest Feast and the modern frenzy of turkey, football, and (10:48) Black Friday doorbuster sales, something essential has been lost. A holiday that began as a solemn (10:58) act of corporate gratitude to Almighty God, has largely become a celebration of abundance (11:05) with no acknowledged source.

Today, I want us to travel back in time to 1621, 1623, and then 1863, (11:19) and clear away the myths and look at the real history, and then come home to 2025, (11:26) and measure it against scripture, and ask, how do we get back to a truly biblical Thanksgiving? (11:34) Oh, the real story of the first Thanksgiving in 1621 was not what your third grade play said. (11:45) School pageants have convinced generations that the pilgrims and Indians sat down (11:50) to a peaceful pumpkin pie filled meal in perfect harmony, complete with buckled hats (11:57) and construction paper headdresses. The truth is more interesting.

In autumn 1621, (12:07) the surviving pilgrims, about 50 out of 102, and 90 or more Wampanoag guests held a three-day (12:20) harvest celebration. There were five deer, untold numbers of fowl, and corn prepared in native (12:28) fashion. There were also military drills and games.

Edward Winslow's brief account mentions (12:36) that they gathered to rejoice together after we

had gathered the fruit of our labors. Undoubtedly, (12:44) prayers were offered, but the event was more diplomatic and succulent than religious. The (12:58) 1623 came the day that they actually recognized as a Thanksgiving, a severe 12-week drought.

(13:08) That's three months. The 12-week drought threatened total crop failure and starvation. (13:15) The colonists called a day of fasting and prayer.

That very afternoon, rain began to fall. (13:23) Governor Bradford ordered the day of humiliation turned into a day of praise. (13:30) That was their real Puritan Thanksgiving, prayer first, food second.

(13:37) The national holiday was born in repentance and blood, not abundance. The annual holiday we (13:46) observe traces its legal origin to Abraham Lincoln's proclamation on October 3rd, 1863, (13:55) in the middle of the Civil War. Issued in the bloodiest year of the Civil War, (14:03) more than 600,000 Americans would eventually die.

Fields were soaked in blood, families torn apart, (14:12) the nation's survival in doubt. Lincoln, in language dripping with biblical cadence, (14:20) called the nation to thank our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens for his mercies, (14:28) while confessing that we have forgotten God and vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts (14:36) that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. (14:44) Today was to be observed with humble penitence for our national perverseness (14:49) and disobedience, and prayers for widows, orphans, and the healing of our nation.

(14:56) This was not a celebration of prosperity. It was a cry of dependence in the middle (15:04) of a catastrophe. So what happened? Number three, what happened? A slow drift (15:13) from Godward gratitude to generic thankfulness, the slow slide into forgetting.

(15:21) Moses warned Israel exactly how this happens. When you have eaten and are satisfied, (15:28) beware that you do not forget the Lord who brought you out. Deuteronomy 8 verses 10 through 18.

(15:36) That is exactly what Romans 12:1 says happens to nations. Although they knew God, (15:44) they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him. The human heart is prone to receive the gift (15:52) and ignore the giver.

Over 150 years, American Thanksgiving has followed the same trajectory. (16:00) The giver has been quietly edited out. Gratitude is now mostly horizontal.

I'm thankful for family (16:08) and health, or vaguely spiritual. I'm thankful to the universe. We have turned a day of solemn (16:15) gratitude into a day of football and doorbuster sales.

God is rarely named. (16:24) So let me put the difference between these three kinds of Thanksgiving, (16:29) biblical Thanksgiving, the original American Thanksgiving, and today's cultural Thanksgiving (16:35) side by side so we can feel the weight of where we've drifted and where we need to return. (16:44) First question, to whom are we giving thanks? Biblical Thanksgiving is always and only and (16:53) forever directed to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The original American Thanksgiving, (16:59) from Plymouth 1623 to Lincoln's 1863 proclamation,

were explicitly addressed to Almighty God, (17:09) the beneficent Father who dwells in the heavens. What about today's cultural Thanksgiving? Most (17:16) Americans say, I'm thankful for my family, my health, this food, and nobody is named. (17:24) It's gratitude with no address.

Thanks floating in the air to nobody in particular. (17:31) Second, when do we give thanks? The Bible says, in everything and all circumstances, (17:39) in plenty and in hunger and abundance and in need. The Pilgrim gave thanks in the middle (17:45) of starvation and drought after half their number perished.

Lincoln proclaimed it in (17:52) the bloodiest year of the Civil War. Today, we mostly give thanks when the table is full, (17:58) the bank account is healthy, and the team wins. When life hurts, the thanks go silent.

(18:12) Third question, what's the tone or spirit? Biblical Thanksgiving is humble, (18:18) repentant, and joyful all at once. The early American observances were solemn, (18:24) days that began in church with confession of sin before anyone touched a bite of food. (18:31) Today, the tone is often too casual, consumeristic, eat too much, watch football, (18:38) camp out for doorbuster sales, and then we collapse.

And lastly, what's the result? (18:48) Biblical Thanksgiving produces worship and a heart anchored in Christ. (18:53) The original American Thanksgiving produced national humility and unity (18:58) under God's hand, and generic cultural Thanksgiving today produces full stomachs, (19:05) mild sentimentality, and surprisingly, empty hearts. So four simple questions, to whom, (19:13) when, in what tone, and to what end do we give thanks? And suddenly, we see how far we've (19:22) wandered from the Bible and from the best of our own history.

So, how do we redeem the weak? (19:31) How do we bring Thanksgiving home to where God always meant it to be? The day is not lost (19:37) because its roots run deep into scripture. We can prune away the cultural overgrowth (19:42) and let the gospel fruit again. Begin your meal with scripture and prayer (19:51) that gives, I'm sorry, begin your meal with scripture and prayer that names the giver, (19:58) like Psalm 100, 103, or 107.

Go around the table and give thanks to God for hard things from this (20:07) past year that he redeemed and used for good. This keeps gratitude honest and God-centered. (20:14) And on Black Friday, give something away instead of buying something.

Turn the day (20:20) outward in generosity rather than inward in consumption. Though America still pauses one (20:27) day a year to say thank you, that is a national mercy, but only the church knows to whom thanks (20:36) is truly due. This Thanksgiving, let your home become a small outpost of the kingdom where (20:43) gratitude is deliberate, vertical, repentant, and joyful.

Let your table become an altar. (20:50) Let the turkey and pie become sacraments pointing to the greater feast, the wounded hands that (20:56) provided every good gift, even and especially when those gifts come through suffering. (21:03) Then Thanksgiving will no longer be merely American.

It will be Christian, and that is the (21:10) redemption of all. So may the Lord make us a truly thankful people for his glory and for the (21:18) watching world's good. And that's the lesson.

If there's anyone here this evening that needs to (21:27) come forward, the invitation is being extended to all those who are subject to it. (21:34) So shall we stand while we sing?