

STUDY NOTES FOR KAREN HOERDEL'S "THANKSGIVING" TEACHING STUDY

This holiday provides an opportunity for us to re-examine what America is about spiritually.

Thanksgiving implies that there is someone to receive the thanks that are given.

The Lord is that someone - yes He is often overlooked.

Thanksgiving apart from God is like Christmas without Christ.

Unless the Lord is at the center of our celebration - it is impossible to truly observe Thanksgiving.

The early American pilgrims had a well-rooted understanding of giving thanks. They patterned their celebration after the Biblical Feast of Tabernacles (see Leviticus 23:33-44). Like the children of Israel, the pilgrims celebrated God's goodness as well as the fact that He provides the harvest.

Israel's thanksgiving feast was not conditioned on a bountiful harvest. Through feast or famine, each year the people were to remember and thank God for His goodness. With the Feast of Tabernacles, even if the harvest was small, the people were reminded of how God delivered them from bondage in Egypt.

WE CAN ALWAYS THANK GOD FOR SOMETHING IF WE JUST TAKE THE TIME TO REMEMBER THE GOOD THINGS HE HAS DONE.

Perhaps this year Thanksgiving is not coming at the happiest time of your life. Remember the pilgrims got off to a difficult start in this new land of America. They contended with famine and cold, sickness and death. Many people died in that first year of settlement. Amidst the joy of that first Thanksgiving, doubtless there was also sorrow. But they realized that God was to be thanked for their new-found freedom from oppression, freedom to worship God and opportunity to begin a new life. They acknowledged the good God had done despite their losses.

Thanksgiving began as a holy day created by a community of God-fearing Puritans sincere in their desire to set aside one day each year especially to thank the Lord for His many blessings.

It was officially proclaimed a national holiday by President Abraham Lincoln on October 3, 1863.

Originally observed to acknowledge the provision of God, let us also make this national holiday a very special time to thank Him for our own provision, our families, our sustenance, and, above all, our redemption in His Son!

Let us also pray that He might restore the religious freedom that those early pilgrims cherished so dearly.

We as believers are to live lives of thanksgiving.

Leviticus 7:12-13 - Old Testament sacrifice of thanksgiving

Leviticus 22:29 - free will offering
Psalm 26:7 - thanksgiving on our lips, not grumbling
Psalm 100:4-5
Ephesians 5:20 - always, for all things
Philippians 4:6 - attitude in prayer in all communication to God
Colossians 3:17
I Thessalonians 5:18 - God's will: give thanks in everything
Hebrews 13:15
Revelation 4:9 - cherubim
Revelation 11:17 - 24 elders = the Church
Praise is the language of Heaven; start practicing now.

Read Psalm 136:1-26 responsively (a good idea to implement around your Thanksgiving celebration at home)

When any nation stops being thankful and forgets God - it is headed for judgment.

Thanksgiving Proclamation

“The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God...

We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious Hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us...

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens.”

By President Abraham Lincoln

1863