



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

*Daily Devotion at Zion + Nov. 15, 2020 AD + **Pentecost Season***

This Week: The National Day of Thanksgivng

Christians cannot contain their thanksgiving.

It spills into every area of life. If we give thanks in our churches and at our altars, we do the same in our homes and at our tables. We give thanks at weddings and funerals alike, when we are children and when we are old, and whether we are poor or we are rich. Thanksgiving, after all, comes from our Lord Himself, who gave thanks at large outdoor meals (John 6:11), by a grave (John 11:41), and even at the hour of His betrayal and impending death (Matthew 26:27). A few decades later, St. Paul evoked this same spirit, “giving thanks always and for everything” (Ephesians 5:20).

So why wouldn't our thanksgiving go national?

Christians may participate freely in civil affairs because our righteousness does not come from keeping ourselves sequestered from secular life but from the unassailable righteousness of Jesus Christ. That righteousness frees us to participate in a national day of Thanksgiving, and to make every day a day of thanksgiving across the nation. So how shall we observe this national holiday in keeping with our Christian devotion? That is, how shall we make it a true day of praise and adoration to Christ our God, and not merely a day to rest and feast a bit? The basic answer is faith, and everything else flows from there.

About the Cover Art

A chest with nothing on it, in a very bare corner of the room, suggests a home with few possessions. The woman kneeling, her hands uplifted, wears a long sleeved shirt, with no particular fashion to it, suggesting both a cooler room and a simplicity of dress. Whatever her circumstance, she gives thanks, her head bowed in humility but arms raised in exultation. “Woman of Praise,” by Lewis Bowman, communicates the Christian ethic of thanksgiving, in which we thank God no matter our situation because we know that life itself is a gift, and that every moment has more blessings than we can truly comprehend.

What Is Biblical Thanksgiving?

“Oh, give thanks to the Lord; call on His name; make known His deeds among the peoples!” (Psalm 105:1) That single verse encapsulates the nature of Bible thanksgiving.

To give thanks is not merely to feel thankful nor to tell God that you appreciate Him (although there’s nothing wrong with that!). More especially, giving thanks is to turn to Him for help and deliverance (“call upon Him”) and recall all that He has done. There is the thanksgiving God desires—and why is it? It’s because God wants, most of all, that you trust Him to save, defend, bless, and love you. Such trust goes to work when it calls on Him, and it thrives when His Word and works are preached. On this Thanksgiving Day, then, pause to ask God for that help, and tell someone all that He has done for you!

Daily Readings for the Week of November 22 (Last Sunday in the Church Year)

S Zechariah 9:9-16
1 Peter 3:13-22
Matthew 21:1-13

Th Zechariah 13:1-9
Ephesians 1:15-23
Luke 19:11-27

M Zechariah 10:1-12
Galatians 6:1-10
Luke 18:15-30

F Zechariah 14:1-11
Romans 15:7-13
Luke 19:28-40

T Zechariah 11:4-17
1 Corinthians 3:10-23
Luke 18:31-43

Sa Zechariah 14:12-21
Philippians 2:1-11
Luke 19:41-48

W Zechariah 12:1-10
Ephesians 1:3-14
Luke 19:1-10

These readings correspond to pages 1266-1301 in Vol. IV of For All the Saints. To acquire For All the Saints or other devotionals, please contact the church office.

Thanksgiving Worship, Public and Private

The liturgy used at Zion for Thanksgiving Day is the liturgy of *matins*, or morning prayer. Our fathers and mothers in the faith have handed down that service to us through centuries of use, and its specific form teaches us how we may sink deeper into the ocean of praise and thanksgiving that befits a Christian life.

Matins follows a simple pattern: Psalms, Hymn, Lesson(s), Preaching, Canticle (a Biblical Hymn), Prayers, and Benediction. Some orders of matins might forego preaching and even the lesson in favor of more psalms, for they are the core of morning prayer. At least two and often three if not four or five psalms will open matins. Psalms are unique in Scripture: they are its only portion that is both God's Word to us and our word to God.

That liturgy of matins helps us take up the yoke of thanksgiving in our homes and personal lives, too. How can we find the words to express all that God has done for us? And while we're at it: why would we limit our thanksgiving only to what He's done for us? To love our neighbor is to love also what God has done for that neighbor, and to be Christian is to belong to a fellowship that spans centuries and still includes those who have died. Why not raise up thanksgiving for what God has done in times past and well as times present?

The psalms help us do all these things. They've crossed the lips and hearts of believers for millennia (in some cases, for 3000-4500 years!), and so they supply us with the thanksgiving of times past. Yet they also gather the voices of today, uniting us in practice with believers across the world. Using a psalm each day, or even several psalms, is an especially good way to bolster your practice of thanksgiving.

For some helpful psalms of thanksgiving, consider these: Psalm 89:1-19, Psalm 100, Psalm 103, Psalm 118, Psalm 138, Psalm 148, and Psalm 150.