



Pastor Hanke's Blog

December 1, 2019

What Should I Be Thankful For?

Bible Reference: Luke 17:11-19

How should my Thanksgiving look different than a non-Christian's Thanksgiving? We are often too busy living to ask ourselves this question, but questions like these can remind us to stop and pray before we enter the busyness each day brings.

For years, Thanksgiving for me was just a day to hang out and forget the busyness of my life. I would pour my creativity into a turkey (instead of ministry) and enjoy the many hands around to help with my little kids. When the day would come to an end I would go back to my world and routines. But how did my Thanksgiving look different from the others?

Thanksgiving is a man-made holiday originating from people who were grateful to receive their freedom. There was no direct connection to Jesus, unlike Christmas and Easter, which makes it the safest holiday to avoid offending someone. That being said, we know that many of our country's first settlers did recognize religious freedom, and therefore, I am sure many of their first thanksgivings acknowledged Jesus' role in that freedom. Though over the years that was not kept as a focus of this day, many families have the tradition to go around the table and say one thing for which they are thankful. As a man-made holiday, I guess naming just one thing is appropriate, but to me, naming only one thing never felt like enough since in Christ we have so much for which to be thankful.

Every year at our Mt. Calvary Thanksgiving service we use the same Bible reading—the story of Jesus healing the ten lepers. This hardly seems like a Thanksgiving story, as we think about the secular view of the holiday, but it does teach us about the best “one thing” to be thankful for. The settlers, in part, had it right. We are thankful for freedom, but it is for our eternal freedom—our salvation. Without salvation, we have nothing to be thankful for. Any list of things we could make that we are thankful for would be destroyed by our sin if it weren't for salvation. Our sinful nature seeks to destroy all that is good. No doubt you have seen evidence of that as marriages are torn apart, wealth thrown away, kids destroyed, people with great jobs get fired and the list goes on. We are born into sin; we are lepers. But that day Jesus brought the most amazing gift ever to those lepers—He brought salvation. Now when it is your turn at the table to say what you are thankful for, you can insert your faith and say, “I am thankful my salvation from Jesus.” That will cover your entire list of blessings.

We start our new church year with thanksgiving as we begin our preparation for Jesus' coming. He came to bring salvation! This Advent as we try to catch a glimpse what it was like to wait for the Messiah to come, we prepare with great anticipation for this special gift from Jesus.

God's Peace,

Pastor Will