



Reasons for Our Thanksgiving

the Word

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Colossians 3:15-17

PITY THOSE WITH NO REFERENCE FOR LIVING.

For the message [word] of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18 NKJV

Those who are perishing go through life like hapless landlubbers in the midst of a storm at sea. All around them the world rages, a world without foundation or stability, a world that blows with reckless abandon first one way then the next. They make for themselves a life raft, but it is worthless against the power of the storm. It offers no protection or support, but crashes up and down the towering waves, tipping and heaving at the mercy of the unbridled wind and the watery, bottomless deep.

They seek refuge in a boat, but they fail to notice that it is simply another product of the storm, and in league with the tempest's evil caprice. The boat is still too small to offer stability or security; the powerful waves are not held back by its inadequate sides, and both stem and stern heave with a nauseating rhythm.

And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up.

Mark 4:37

All around those who are perishing is the shouting and tumult of a world gone mad, a world that whispers sweet lies while sticking a knife between the ribs. It is an inhospitable place that plays by dark rules based on deceit. It is ruled by a dark lord who masquerades as a lord of light, a master of evil who presents himself as the master of all that is reasonable and good. And

they are part of it; they do not stand on the periphery, but dwell in its midst. They subscribe to its logic. They reason by its wisdom.

And all the while they are going down.

A Quiet Word

There are others, however, who are in the boat with them, but are not *of* it. Because they are kin to their shipmates, they experience many of the same twists and turns of the storm, but they are not going down with them.

More than that, they know it. They know that someone stronger than the storm rides along with them in the boat, for they had invited Him.

Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him.

Mark 4:36

So when the storm hits, and the small boat begins to rock and be tossed about, they could rest comfortably and unafraid in the knowledge that all things—even the elements and the turbulent sea—are in the reliable hands of the Lord. But because they are still kin with those who are perishing, there remains a germ of doubt and forgetfulness. They forget that they have no reason to worry.

Even so, when doubt and unreasoning despair strike, their small faith at least takes them to the one who can help.

Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

Mark 4:38

Well, of course He does. But He also cares that they remember that, unlike their

woebegone shipmates, within them dwells His word. It is a part of them; they carry it around with them as a library of knowledge, a governor of their thoughts and actions, a guidebook and a light. That which dwells within them is larger and stronger than any storm that comes their way. It is reliable.

It is truth.

So He reminds them of this word, this quiet strength that can at once speak the universe into existence and whisper tender mercies to a child.

And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.

Mark 4:39

The Engine of the Church

For those who are perishing, "truth" is a moving target, subject to the whims and vagaries of the human species. For the believer, truth is Christ's word—His spoken words, as well as the message of His life. They embrace it as the rock upon which they stand, salt that cannot lose its savor, the light they cannot hide under a bushel. It represents Jesus Himself, along with everything His life stands for. Jesus was *the* Word, come to give His life for man, and His word is what was left behind when He returned to the Father: His thoughts, His commandments, His law, His personality, and His pervading spirit that seeks out a dwelling place within each of us. Living there, He guides us through the perils of this temporal life—speaking truth, defining truth, *being* truth.

And for that indwelling word we give thanksgiving and praise, for it is the engine that drives the church—the Body of Christ. Without His word the church would be just another club, just another social gathering

for those of common interest. But because His word dwells richly—abundantly, extravagantly—within each person in the body, there is a uniting joy and *koinonia* that cannot be found anywhere else. It is substantial. It is unique. It is what fuels our "wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," and what binds us all together as brothers and sisters.

Filled

Believers can look upon the cross, and be moved in their spirit. As they consider the bloody sacrifice made there, they feel the tug of their spirit toward God's. In a similar way, believers can look upon the life of Jesus Christ and be moved in their spirit toward His. Beginning with the prophecies in the Old Testament that told of Him, and His mysterious pre-incarnate visitations, we can read His spoken words and of the events in His earthly life. We can read how He treated people—both followers and enemies—to see how Jesus might have us treat each other and those without. We can read of His times in prayer to the Father, moments of intimate communion and pain, to draw lessons for our own times with the Father.

We can begin with the template of His perfect life and, growing slowly in our sanctification, make it our own.

There are few things more worthy of our thanksgiving than the privilege to be like Christ. As we acquire more of His word, setting it deep within our being, it gives us wisdom and discernment, a spirit filled with worship and praise, and a heart bursting with gratitude to God. 

*O Word of God Incarnate,
O wisdom from on high,
O Truth unchanged, unchanging,
O Light of our dark sky;
We praise Thee for the radiance
That from the hallowed page,
A lantern to our footsteps,
Shines on from age to age.*

*The church from her dear Master
Received the gift divine,
And still that light she lifteth
O'er all the earth to shine.
It is the golden casket,
Where gems of truth are stored;
It is the heaven-drawn picture
Of Christ, the living Word.*

*It floateth like a banner
Before God's host unfurled;
It shineth like a beacon
Above the darkling world.
It is the chart and compass
That o'er life's surging sea,
Mid mists and rocks and quicksands,
Still guides, O Christ, to Thee.*

William W. How