

THE FORGOTTEN HOLIDAY

Reflections
by the Pond

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**Praise the Lord!
Oh give thanks
to the Lord,
for He is
good;
For His loving-
kindness is
everlasting.**

Psalms 106:1

IT NOW BEGINS EVEN BEFORE HALLOWEEN. The importance of Christmas sales to retail balance sheets means that the season begins earlier each year. It will not be long before stores will have permanent, year-round Christmas departments, with the result that the holiday will cease to be anything special—if that sad consequence has not already occurred.

In all this, Thanksgiving has become the forgotten holiday. What used to be an orderly, comfortably paced transition from late summer to autumn to winter is now a short-circuited leapfrog from Halloween to Christmas. No longer are there cozy images of pilgrims and fan-tailed turkeys. Now intermingled with the ghosts and goblins of October are the glittery reds and greens of December. And the holiday of November has passed into the mists of oblivion.

But no matter what the world at large decrees, the child of God should never disregard Thanksgiving, for that antiquated holiday is a perfect annual reminder for the Christian of how he is to be living every day of his grace-authored life.

It is my habit, during my half-mile walks between the house and the mailbox, to entertain two thoughts. First, when I see or hear something that brings joy to my heart—fresh green leaves budding on a spring day, the fragile beauty of Linda's gladiolus, the sound of the wind through evergreens, the surprise of new young ones in a robin's nest, the beauty of freshly fallen snow—I sigh and say to myself, "I am so blessed. What have I done to deserve this?"

Second, and immediately, I remind myself that, indeed, I have done *nothing* to deserve this—that it is all the result of God's grace, not mine. I remind myself that each thing—each flower and tree and singing bird—is a free gift from the Father. My life is what it is because of His gracious love.

As a result of this two-step exercise, I return to the house with not just the mail, but a heart filled with thanksgiving for the one responsible for my life: the Lord God. The exercise helps keep things in perspective and, as my dad used to say, helps keep my head screwed on straight.

Our life—no matter where we live, and no matter the conditions—we owe to Him. He is the one owed the gratitude and thanksgiving.

Sometimes we need convincing—or at least the reminder. Hence the value of acknowledging the annual holiday. It's very easy, in the society in which we live and move, to lose the habit of thanking God for what we have. The

habit of this world—and especially the population of the United States—is self-sufficiency, boot-strap pulling. As a consequence, we come to believe that we are responsible for who we are and what we have.

So we must make a point to purposely fight this current of conceit. As you move through the coming days, make it a habit to pause and consider anything and everything—your family, your house, the trees, the flowers, the food on your table—and work out in your own mind how that thing has been provided by God.

Then thank Him.

