



Thanksgiving

In Everything

To sound abroad the worthy praises of the God of all grace should be the everyday business of a pardoned sinner. Let men slander us as they will, let us not defraud the Lord of his praises; let dogs bark, but let us like the moon shine on. God's people should not be tongue-tied. The wonders of divine grace are enough to make the tongue of the dumb sing. God's works of love are wondrous if we consider the unworthiness of their objects, the costliness of their method, and the glory of their result. And as men find great pleasure in discoursing upon things remarkable and astonishing, so the saints rejoice to tell of the great things which the Lord hath done for them.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

WHY IS IT ONE PERSON can earn a large salary and say, "Look what I have done," while another person can earn the same and say, "Thank you, God!"? Why is it one person can possess a big house and fancy car and say, "Look what I have," while another person can possess the same and say, "Thank you, God!"?

Why is it one person can build something with his own two hands and say, "Look what I did," while another person can do the same and say, "Thank you, God!"? Why is it one person can labor and sweat over a productive garden and say, "Look what I grew," while another person can labor just as much but say, "Thank you, God!"? Why is it one person can have good fortune and say, "Look how lucky I am," while another person can experience the same and say, "Thank you, God!"?

This kind of thanksgiving is not born in the act, or the possession, or the accomplishment. This kind of thanksgiving comes not from man's experience upon the soil, but from man's experience with the unseen world. For such odd behavior is not born here, but from above.

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

There are aspects of Kingdom living that are nearly impossible to explain to those without. Indeed, they can be difficult enough to explain to some within.

Many years ago we finished construction of our small barn, and in a human, physical sense we did it all ourselves. After professionals poured the concrete slab, my father-in-law and I cut every board and nailed it into place. We constructed each rafter and lifted it over our heads to drop it onto the two outside walls. We were the ones clinging to the tops of the tall ladders to lay every shingle in place. We hammered and measured and sawed; we groaned and grunted and sweat away more than a few pounds; and when something failed to fit as planned, we were the ones who had to do it over. Linda and her mom painted all the trim boards with primer and two coats of Barcelona Brown, then Linda and I painted all the outside panels with two coats of Berber Ivory. Likewise, in a human, financial sense, the money to pay for it all came from our own pocket—specifically, from Linda’s long hours at the office.

So why is it, then, after it was all done and I stood outside and gazed upon this new building, that my heart filled with thanksgiving to God? Why is it, even today, when I consider this barn built by human effort from begin-

ning to end, that I rejoice that the Lord has been so generous as to give us this thing?

We do not enter this world already in possession of this rather odd (from an earthly perspective) response. It is something given us, by grace, from above. Beyond that, it is an other-worldly attitude which must be cultivated and nurtured.

When we become a son or daughter of the living God through the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ; when we begin and sustain the never-completed process of conforming to His image; when we learn His mind, and strive for His vision; when we tune our hearing to His voice, tuning out the clamor of the world; when we give our lives over to His invasive yet comforting Spirit—then, and only then, are we able to see the powerful hand and gentle grace of God even in our own efforts.

Our thanksgiving to God is born of the Spirit—not our own spirit, but His. The Holy Spirit is a tuning fork vibrating to the note of heaven. He comes into us and sets our own spirit vibrating in concert with Him. At this joining, we are now singing in unison with heaven. The things of this earth begin to fade—its habits, its philosophies, its methods and ways.

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face;
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.*

Helen H. Lemmel

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Romans 1:20

One morning, driving into town for such mundane reasons as to get two new tires on the Jeep, mail some letters, and stop at the grocery store for pre-Thanksgiving supplies, I was startled by the early morning beauty lying all around me.

As the sun tipped its focused light down into the valley it sent glittering sparkles dancing across the landscape. All the bare trees and dried grass and weeds in the fields were frosted in white, everything coated with hoarfrost. And as if the landscape were sprinkled with faceted diamonds, the clean morning sunlight created brilliant sparkles across the fields.

And once again my heart sang out with praise, my mind entertained pleasant thoughts of my God—the God who had made it all.

Why does beauty—especially that of nature—lead us into thoughts of God? Perhaps it is because of that deep and mystical yearning with which we are born: that yearning to commune with our Maker and Lord. As the heart and mind are drawn to earthly beauty, the spirit is drawn to a beautiful God.

From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth.

Psalm 50:2 NIV

Perfection is pleasing to the eye, and God is perfect. And even into this fallen world God has poured the essence of His perfect beauty. In every tree, every flower, every grain of sand on the ocean beach dwells some portion of a perfect God's beauty. In the small things we see the intimate qualities of His personality; in the larger things we see the grandeur of His royal throne.

And in everything we see His beauty.

And for everything we give Him thanks.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 NIV

*Now thank we all our God,
With heart, and hands, and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom His world rejoices;
Who from our mother's arms
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.*

*All praise and thanks to God
The Father now be given,
The Son, and Him who reigns
With them in highest heaven,
The one eternal God,
Whom earth and heaven adore;
For thus it was, is now,
And shall be evermore.*

Martin Rinckart