



You see, it is a state of mind, really.
A mystical, other-worldly, sometimes
confusing, sometimes ecstatic, utterly
liberating state of mind. More than a belief,
more than just a philosophy, far more than
just rules or an action, it is a way of life—a
way of living. It boils down to this: We are
thankful for what someone has done for us;
based on that, we give. We don't just give
thanks—"Thank you. That was a very nice
thing to do."—we *live a life of giving*
because we are thankful.

THANKS—*Giving*

Real, substantial, authentic thanks-giving is the product of a heart that has been broken—not broken in the soap opera, smarmy dime-romance sense—"Oh, my boyfriend's left me for another girl, sha-na-na."—but the reductive brokenness that results in a life renewed, a life rescued from the abyss. The first step upward toward God is trod upon the shattered remnants of the old self, a life broken, a heart contrite.

For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;
You are not pleased with burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.
(Psalm 51:16-17)

CHOOSING A SUPERIOR MASTER

Few things today are more alien to modernity. No one trying their best to fit into today's society is going to subscribe to this (as they see it) antiquated, obsolete concept of thanks-giving. Polite appreciation might be permitted—so long as we don't get carried away. By all means, show restrained gratitude, a gracious "thank you," even a hearty slap on the back for a job well done. But this business of brokenness sounds alarmingly like *servitude*—and we just cannot countenance that at all.

But God's word, which is supposed to be the Christian's source-book, says something quite different. According to the apostle Paul, we are *born* slaves. The only question is, slaves to what?

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

(Romans 6:16)

The Christian is not someone who has moved from unbridled freedom into a life of abject bondage, but someone who has simply made the decision for a superior Master.

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

(Romans 6:17-18)

The work of the Holy Spirit notwithstanding, the believer has made the conscious decision to leave a slaveholder of unimaginable cruelty and depravity, to serve a benevolent Master of unimaginable mercy and kindness. And the best way to serve this new Master is to live a life of thanks-giving.

THE DEBT WE CAN NEVER REPAY

Our thanks-giving is based on Calvary. Our *faith* is based on the open tomb of Easter morning, for in His resurrection we have the promise of our own. But our life of thanks-giving is based on His once-for-all sacrifice on the cross. Where the Lamb of God's blood flowed down, there we have the debt we can never repay—a debt God does not expect us to repay, nor even to try.

It may be enough for some, but for the believer acquiring the image of Christ as he journeys upward toward God, a life of simple gratitude or thankfulness is not sufficient. There is something primal buried deep inside the soul that clamors to express more. Struggling always against the weak and lazy flesh, the spirit of the believer yearns to be united with the Spirit of God in an attitude of worshipful submission—to express a much deeper gratitude in a life of thanks-giving.

We look upon that ugly and profane cross, that instrument of gleeful torture (for what else can one call an intentional, public death by slow asphyxiation and drowning?) and our heart breaks. The first child-like response is, indeed, one of thanksgiving and praise for a God who would willingly sacrifice *Himself* for His followers. With that despicable, glorious sight in our gaze, we fall down in grateful worship.

*My Lord, my Master, at Thy feet adoring,
I see Thee bowed beneath Thy load of woe:*

*For me, a sinner, is Thy life-blood pouring;
For Thee, my Saviour, scarce my tears will flow.*

*Thine own disciple to the Jews has sold Thee,
With friendship's kiss and loyal word he came;
How oft of faithful love my lips have told Thee,
While Thou hast seen my falsehood and my shame!*

*With taunts and scoffs they mock what seems Thy weakness,
With blows and outrage adding pain to pain;
Thou art unmoved and steadfast in Thy meekness;
When I am wronged how quickly I complain!*

*My Lord, my Saviour, when I see Thee wearing
Upon Thy bleeding brow the crown of thorn,
Shall I for pleasure live, or shrink from bearing
Whate'er my lot may be of pain or scorn?*

*O Victim of Thy love, O pangs most healing,
O saving death, O wounds that I adore,
O shame most glorious! Christ, before Thee kneeling,
I pray Thee keep me Thine for evermore.
(Jacques Bridaine, translated by Thomas Benson Pollock)*

As authentic and unselfish our praise, after a while we realize that it is not nearly enough. Something in us cries out to express even more for this gracious, butchered Savior. Our words, our songs, our corporate devotion are not sufficient to express what lies yet unexpressed in our heart. We must give Him more than words and songs—we must give Him *everything that we are*. We must come to a point of agreement with the apostle Paul, who wrote,

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

A LIFE OF GIVING

And agree we do. There is nothing else left, nothing that will satisfy our longing, except to be broken.

So before the cross of Christ, before the open tomb, before the Father's throne we remove the crown that sits atop our head—that glorious crown that represents every gift we have ever received from above, every talent instilled, every act we have ever performed—and we carefully place it at His feet. As part of our worship we agree with the Lord that He owns us completely. We are not our own. We are His to use as He wills.

We will now spend the remainder of our days living for Him. Our talents belong to Him. Our will has been subjected to His. Our desires will be aligned with His. Everything of our lives will be subsumed in His.

We will spend the rest of our lives thanks-giving.
Because of the cross, we will live a life of giving.

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