

Reflections by the Pond

THE WRITINGS OF DAVID S LAMPEL



Reasons
for Our

Thanksgiving

photo by Koshy Koshy

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life;
he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he
who believes in Me will never thirst."

John 6:35

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the glory and
praise of Christ
our Lord.



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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



painting by Frank C. Peyraud

Here in the United States, the fourth Thursday of every November is a warm and precious holiday. Not yet despoiled by unbridled commerce and cynicism, our Thanksgiving celebrates not just (for some) a profound gratitude for God's blessings, but the essential character of this people. We always have been, and to a lesser degree continue to be, people of the land, with boundless fields of plenty that feed not only our own, but count-

less millions around the world. Beyond the traditional feast, Thanksgiving celebrates the American spirit of generosity, the depth and richness of our culture, our "spacious skies, and amber waves of grain," our "purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain."

As with most secular remembrances, the follower of Christ enjoys the privilege of added depth and meaning behind the Thanksgiving holiday. For the believ-

er, Thanksgiving is a time to remember that God is the one who has supplied the bounty, the richness of life, the filled belly, the roof over our respective heads. Americans may celebrate that indomitable, pioneer spirit of our forefathers, but Christians understand that none of the blessings of our land would have been those pioneers' reward without the gracious hand of Providence.

And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:19

If the more than 300 million citizens of the United States have sufficient reasons

to be thankful, believers draw blessings from an even deeper well. As bountiful and rich as the land may be, it is yet finite: it is capable of feeding only so many. More than that, drought, pestilence, economic or moral ruin remain very real possibilities.

But the bounty and riches of Christ—available to all who have taken His name—are without limit, for they are drawn not from earth's finite resources, but from the bottomless springs of heaven itself.

THE PEACE OF GOD is like a multi-faceted diamond: One clear, exquisitely cut gem, yet afire with a rainbow of brilliant colors.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.
Romans 5:1-2

The first peace we enjoy in Christ is that between the believer and his Maker. Through Christ, the wrath and enmity between God and man has been replaced with a permanent peace. We have been saved from that deserved wrath; we have been reconciled to Him, our debt of sin

forever expunged.

This comes first; no other kind of peace Christ offers can be enjoyed by man before this fundamental peace is established. It is set in place not universally or even corporately, but personally, individually. Christ's sacrificial death did not establish any sort of universal reconciliation between God and man. It established its *availability*, but for it to become a reality in any one life, that life must accept the free gift. Once accepted, the full panoply of Christ's peace becomes available to the believer.



But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one

and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall...

Ephesians 2:13-14

At the cross, Jesus broke down the ancient wall that had separated Jew from Gentile. But in a broader sense, His peace breaks down contemporary barriers, as well. Black and white, German and French, rich and poor—all are brothers and sisters by the blood of Christ. This peace does not erase differences, but the indwelling Holy Spirit imbues all who know Him with a familial, spiritual connection that can overpower all earthly differences.

Far more than simply an absence of earthly conflict or war, biblical peace denotes a sense of spiritual wholeness and well-being. The "peace of Christ" should

not be confused with any sort of sixties-style, “Hey, man, that’s cool,” sophomoric disinterest in anything outside of oneself. Christ’s peace is not the absence of conflict, but is His consolation for the believer in the midst of earthly conflict.

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

Those who are in Christ Jesus experience just as much suffering and misfortune as anyone else—sometimes more. But through the trials they have the benefit of Christ’s spirit of consolation. They have the “peace of God, which surpasses all understanding”—something which the world cannot (and refuses to) understand. The constant goal of those outside of Christ is to avoid problems; the goal of those in Christ is to meet problems with Him by their side.



For the believer, the Thanksgiving holiday is, at its root, a time of praise, for whenever we remember that through

Christ we have peace with God, peace with each other, and a sustaining peace about our circumstances, the heart can only express its overflowing gratitude.

This supernatural yet very real peace is difficult to describe—especially to those who do not share in it. Many years ago I was traveling by air between the west coast and the Midwest. At a layover in a large city I was feeling lonely, tired, and forsaken. The milling crowds, the noise and smoke all pressed in on me, and combined to leave me panicked, desperate for a quiet place away from it all. Somehow I found a corner in the waiting area that, for the moment, was devoid of other travelers. But the smoke and noise continued to envelope me. My panic rose, and I struggled to remain calm in the cacophony of the huge room. But then, just as I felt my sanity slipping away, I noticed in the crowd a particular man; on the back of his jacket were printed the words “King Jesus.” Instantly I felt a mysterious calm pass over me as I realized that I was not alone. There was a brother here, nearby. More than that, in his choice of apparel this anonymous brother reminded me that I was never alone—that Jesus, my King, was always

beside me, no matter the circumstances.

This is the peace Christ brings. You cannot find this peace anywhere else. It is not of this world, but only comes down from above.

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”

John 14:27

*There is a place of quiet rest,
Near to the heart of God,
A place where sin cannot molest,
Near to the heart of God.*

*There is a place of comfort sweet,
Near to the heart of God,
A place where we our Saviour meet,
Near to the heart of God.*

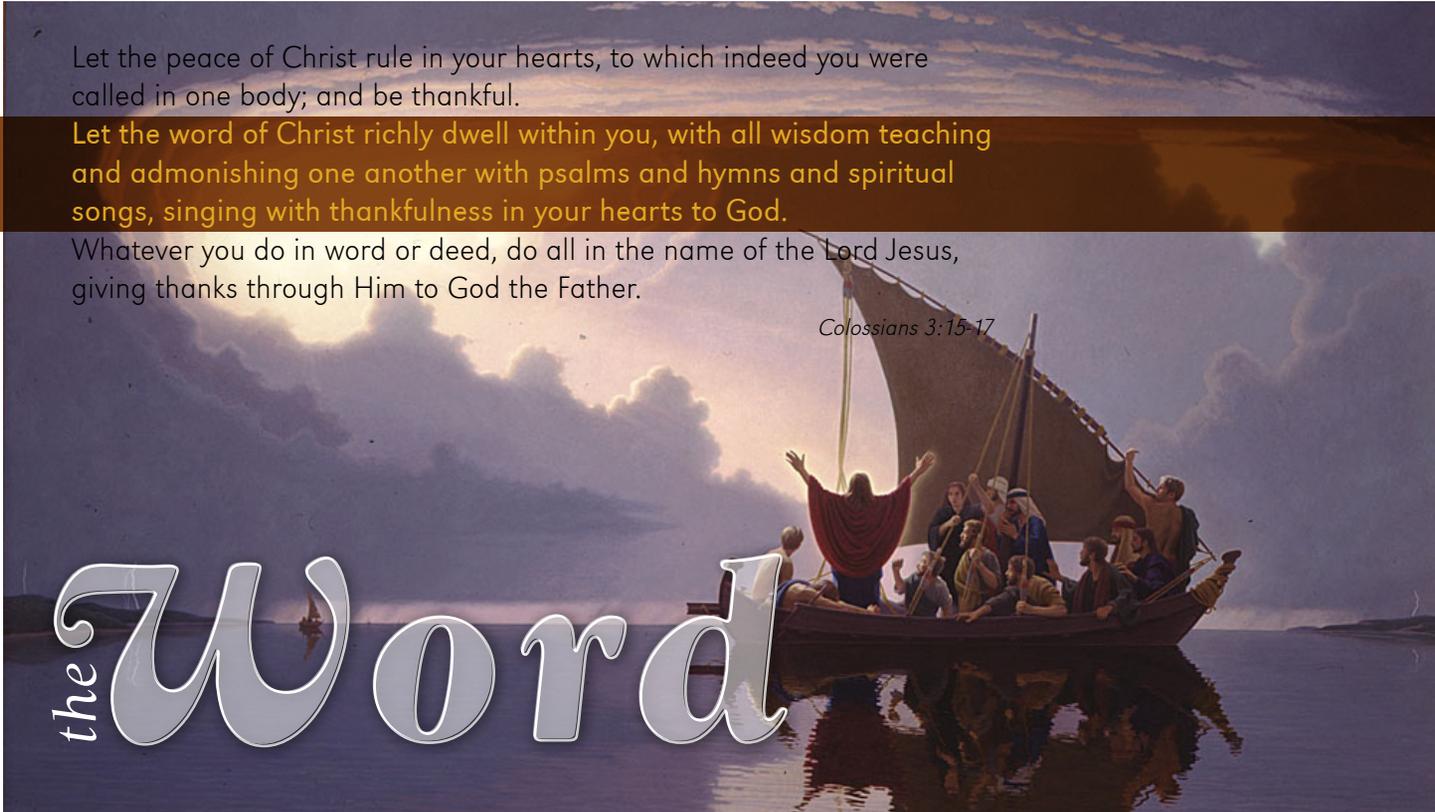
Cleland B. McAfee

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

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Colossians 3:15-17



the Word

painting by Stephen Gjertson

PITY THOSE WITH NO REFERENCE FOR LIVING.

For the 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

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.



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 can 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



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 throughout the entirety of the Bible. 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.



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, as we gradually grow 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.

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

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Colossians 3:15-17



15.10.24	"
17. 5.96	"
26. 5.28	"
14. 3.07	"
12. 7.08	Schreibkraft
1. 2.21	Metallarbeiter
19. 6.00	"
28. 2.13	"
3. 5.26	"
8.12.19	"
10. 1.13	"
13. 7.11	"
6. 1.39	Arztin
16. 7.18	Metallarbeiter
29.11.10	"
28. 5.95	"
22. 4.14	"
22.11.06	"
6. 3.58	"
4. 9.14	"
20.10.04	"
8- 9.27	"
8. 4.17	"
13. 1.11	"
2. 1.11	"
2. 1.11	"

His Name

MY FAMILY NAME MADE ITS WAY to the United States from Europe on August 30, 1904. On that date, a nineteen-year-old Louis Lampel walked down the gangway of the *Bremen* at Ellis Island in the New York harbor. His voyage across the Atlantic had started ten days earlier in Bremen, Germany, but his journey toward a new life in the United States actually began from his home in Czartkin, Austria.

My grandfather was a Jew: The ship's manifest, filled out prior to departure in Germany, lists his ethnicity as "Hebrew." It is safe to assume that Louis probably was not a "practicing" Jew, but one by blood, since my father, born thirteen years later in Wellsburg, Iowa, never mentioned this heritage. Indeed, he may

never have been sure of it himself. And from before 1945, my family has been Protestant Christian.

Nevertheless, the name “Lampel” is closely associated with German or Slav Jewry. A sampling of other Lampels in the Ellis Island records reveals first names such as Abram, Baruch, Franz, Hersch, Ignatz, Isaac, Isaak, Isidor, Izsak, Jacob, Jakob, Josef, Jsaak, Michel, Moritz, Moses, Oscar, Salomon, Simon, Wasil, Yosef, and Ziskind. Most came from the same area: Austria, Germany, or Hungary.



This history recently became all the more poignant to me when I heard our family name uttered in the movie *Schindler's List*. Though I had watched the film several times before, this was the first time I heard the name. During the last third of the film, Schindler has paid off the Commandant and “his people” are being transferred to his factory—instead of being shipped off to the death camps. As the family groups approach a small table before boarding a train, they declare their names to the officer, who then checks them against the list. At the table one man declares his family name of “Lam-

pel” to the officer. Hearing this, I was stunned. But, not trusting either my ears or the Spielberg movie script, I located a database of the names on Schindler’s list at a web site. There I discovered three Lampels listed: a mother and daughter, and an older man probably of a separate family unit.

The places, names and dates of these associations suggest no immediate connection between my family in the United States and these three European Jews saved by Oskar Schindler. Still, the realization caused a visceral reaction in me. Whether far distant or close, here was evidence that people of my blood had passed through the hideous persecution of the Nazis, but ultimately had survived through the mercies of a Gentile stranger.



“I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them

in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.”

John 17:9-11

No matter their temporal ethnicity, all believers share a family name. They are “of Christ,” they are “in Christ,” they are “Christ-ians”—meaning, “followers of Christ.” More than just adherents to a philosophy or creed, Christians are actual members of His family.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:12-13

This is what it means to be “born again.” Believers have been reborn into the family of God through Christ. Because of this, they obtain full rights as sons and daughters of our heavenly Father. They have set aside as ancient history their original birth of the flesh, and have been birthed anew of the Spirit. Christians, because of this rebirth, become brothers and sisters

of Christ Jesus. Not just adherents, not just disciples or followers; believers are kin.

We share the name of Christ.



Shortly after Pentecost, the apostle Peter came upon a man congenitally lame who was begging outside the temple gate. The man put out his hand, asking for alms. But Peter told the beggar that he possessed something better.

“I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!”

Acts 3:6

Immediately the man’s legs were strengthened and he began dancing around, giddy with the joy of being able to walk for the first time in his life. The people around them were amazed at the miracle, so Peter took the opportunity to preach a little sermon, making it clear from whence the miracle had come—that the one responsible for the healing was none other than the Jesus they had just crucified. More specifically, it was the powerful name of Jesus that did it.

“And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.”

Acts 3:16

Today, in the Western world, a person’s name is little more than a convenient label. It is assigned as a way to mark one person out from another—to denote one family from another, and one person from another within each family. It can be used as a term of endearment, but more often it is alphabetized in a phone book, printed on invoices and bills, used as the means to receive one’s appropriate mail. It is not meant to say anything about the character or personality of the individual. It is just a label.

But in Jesus’ time a person’s name represented *who that person was*. And in God’s economy, the name of “Jesus” represents everything of His personality, His goodness and strength, His purity and grace—His deity. Placing one’s faith and trust in the name of Jesus is the same as placing that faith and trust in the person of Jesus.

But the relationship does not end there. Those who believe in the name of Jesus actually acquire that name as their own. It becomes their family name from that point on, as they are now “in Christ.”

And what a name it is—a name before which every knee will bow.

For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11

And for the privilege and honor of sharing this most holy, powerful name, we give humble thanks, grateful praise and, ultimately, worshipful adoration.

“Gratitude exclaims, very properly, ‘How good of God to give me this.’
Adoration says, ‘What must be the quality of the Being whose far-off and momentary coruscations are like this!’
One’s mind runs back up the sunbeam to the sun.”

C. S. Lewis