

THE LORD'S SUPPER "THANKSGIVING"
Colossians 2:6-7, 11-12

(GNT) Since you have accepted Christ Jesus as Lord, live in union with Him. ⁷ Keep your roots deep in Him, build your lives on Him, and become stronger in your faith, as you were taught. And be filled [be overflowing] with thanksgiving. ¹¹ In union with Christ you were circumcised, not with the circumcision that is made by human beings, but with the circumcision made by Christ, which consists of being freed from the power of this sinful self. ¹² For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ through your faith in the active power of God, who raised Him from death.

A dear lady was not a cook, but she decided that after many years her family should eat at home for Thanksgiving. She told them, "I've cooked this turkey for the first time and I'm gonna bring it to the table. If it's not good, don't say a word. If it's not good, there will be no negative comments; we'll just go to a restaurant and have a meal." After bringing out the turkey, she went back to the kitchen for the dressing. When she returned to the dining room, her husband and son already had on their hats and coats! They then partook of a restaurant's Thanksgiving buffet with a mixture of relief, chagrin, and thankfulness.

Two men were walking through a field one day when they spotted an enraged bull. Instantly they dashed for the nearest fence. The snorting bull following in hot pursuit was quickly gaining on them. They realized they wouldn't make it in time to the fence and safety. Terrified, one shouted out, "Put up a prayer, John. We're in for it!" John replied, "I can't. I've never prayed in public in my life." "But you must!" begged his friend. "The bull is almost upon us!" "All right," panted John, "I'll say the only prayer I know. It's one my father used to repeat at the dinner table: 'O Lord, for what we are about to receive, make us truly thankful.'"

Can you find reasons to "be filled with thanksgiving" to honor Thanksgiving Day? Granted, our circumstances may not seem best. We may face uncertainties over jobs, our country, struggles of family members, health concerns, loneliness, or other issues. But our Maker instructs us in **I Thessalonians 5:18** (NIV) to find something to be thankful for in every situation: "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." If you, "keep your roots deep in Him [into Christ Jesus after receiving Him as your personal Lord and Savior], and "build your lives on Him," you'll, "become stronger in your faith, as you were taught," in the "active power of God" in your behalf, and you'll experience growth in "being freed from the power of this sinful self," from your sinful impulses and desires. These wonderful realities can "fill us with thanksgiving," regardless of any personal struggles or discouraging circumstances confronting us.

Those who don't know **Jesus Christ** may wonder why we can be content and be at peace despite difficult circumstances we are facing. Our secret is that we are grateful for God's blessings we can see with our eyes of faith, despite our struggles, of which many are unaware. A Sunday School teacher asked her class what they were thankful for. A little girl said "I'm thankful for my bedroom. My younger brothers have to share a room. But I get to have a room all for myself! A little boy said, "I'm thankful for my puppy. I got him as a present for my birthday, and I play with him every day." Another boy thought for a moment and said "I'm thankful for my glasses." Surprised, the teacher asked, "Why are you thankful for your glasses?" He said, "Because they keep the boys from hitting me and they keep the girls from kissing me!"

Can you name some reasons why people are not properly thankful for their blessings? A chief reason for ingratitude is the nature of sin: we'll not be content with what we already have if we selfishly believe something else can fill our lives with the contentment only God can truly give us. Adam and Eve knew Paradise on Earth from the moment of their creation; filled with everything God knew they needed for everlasting joy and contentment. Yet, they could not resist the temptation to reach for something more, despite God warning them this would shatter the blissful harmony they enjoyed with their Creator and between themselves (**Genesis 1:26-30; 2:15-25; 3:1-6**). How much are you still afflicted with the original sin of ingratitude?

Max Lucado is a best-selling Christian author and pastor of Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, Texas. He and his newlywed wife served for five years in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as full-time missionaries. His father's death in 1987 of ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) led him to return with his family to Texas, where he was born. One day in Rio de Janeiro, Max Lucado was walking on his way to the University to teach a class, when he felt a tug on his pants leg. Turning around, he saw a little boy 5 or 6 years old with dark, beady eyes and a dirty little face. He looked up at the big American and said, "Bread, Sir" (in Portuguese, of course). Max confessed, "There are always little beggar boys in the streets of Brazil. Usually I turn away from them because there are so many and you can't feed them all. But there was something so compelling about this little boy that I couldn't turn away." Taking his hand, he said, "Come with me" and took him into a coffee shop. Max told the owner, "I'll have a cup of coffee. Give the boy a piece of pastry; whatever he wants."

The coffee counter was at the other end of the store. Max went to get his coffee; forgetting about the little boy because beggar boys usually get the bread and then run back out into the street and disappear. But this one didn't. After he got his pastry, he went over to the big American and just stood there until Max felt his staring eyes. Lucado said, "I turned and looked at him. Standing up, his eyes just about hit my belt buckle. Then slowly his eyes came up until they met mine. The little boy, holding his pastry in one hand, looked up and said, 'Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.'" Lucado said, "I was so touched by the boy's thanks that I would have bought him the store. I sat there for another 30 minutes, late for my class, just thinking about a little beggar boy who came back and said, 'Thank you.'" His thankful attitude impressed upon Max Lucado the impact we can have upon others and ourselves by sincerely expressing thanks to God and to others.

It's become common terminology among Christians in America to speak of "accepting" **Jesus Christ** to describe the act whereby one's sins are forgiven and our eternal place in Heaven is secured. Modern Bible versions, like the Good News and New Living Translations, have adopted this term. But our English word "accept" can mean nothing more than "agree to" or "resign oneself to" without any genuine commitment on our part. We can "resign ourselves" to many things we're not in favor of—a job layoff, the death of a loved one, or a health crisis—though we'd reject what's happening to us if we could. We certainly feel no need to be thankful for such circumstances. Or we may "accept" help when we are in desperate straits, whether in the form of government assistance, an emergency loan, or being rescued from great danger or death, without any genuine devotion or gratitude toward our benefactor demanded of us. Sadly, some professed Christians display little genuine devotion or thankfulness toward the Savior, the Lord **Jesus Christ**.

The Apostle Paul chose a Greek term in **Colossians 2:6-7** that is much stronger than "accepted." It literally means, "to take to one's self," or "to join to one's self." Most Bible versions wisely translate our text, "as you have *received* Christ Jesus the Lord," not "accepted Christ Jesus as Lord." This Greek word appears in **Matthew 1:24** (NIV): "When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and *took* Mary home as his wife." When you were married, or if you get married, would you be pleased by this response from your bride or bridegroom when the minister asks, "Will you take this man (or woman) to be your lawfully wedded husband (or wife)?" and your intended sighs and says, "I'll resign myself to this"? Joseph did much more than merely *agree* to take Mary as his wife or *resign himself to* it. He committed his heart to Mary because he believed nothing would give him greater joy and blessing than to become one with this special gift of God. The more he embraced the privileges and responsibilities of being Mary's husband, chosen by God to give birth to our Savior, the more Joseph's heart was "filled with thanksgiving." As Christians, the more we embrace the privileges and responsibilities of being united to "Christ Jesus" as our Savior and Lord, the more our heart will "be filled [be overflowing] with thanksgiving." The level of our thanksgiving toward Christ is a good indicator of the level of our commitment and devotion toward Him.

A certain man had a reputation for being good but also a bit stingy. He'd bargain and haggle, seeking never to pay the price asked. He especially hated paying his medical fees. One day, while eating fish, a bone became lodged in his throat and within minutes he could scarcely breathe. His wife frantically rushed

him to the family doctor's office, which was just around the corner. Just as the patient's face was turning blue, the physician quickly removed the bone with a pair of forceps. After he was breathing normally again, though overwhelmed with gratitude to the doctor for saving his life, he began to worry about the medical fees. Trying his best to keep his costs down, he turned to the good doctor and asked, "How much do I owe you for this small two-minute job?" The doctor, who knew his patient's miserly habit all too well, replied, "Just pay me half of what you would have when the bone was still stuck in your throat!"

Two Greek words are translated "thanks," "thankfulness," or "thanksgiving" in the New Testament. Both words are rooted in the Greek word for grace, *charis*, which describes generous giving without regard for the worthiness of those upon whom the gifts are bestowed, such as Max Lucado bestowed upon the Brazilian beggar boy. The Greek word translated "thanksgiving" in **Colossians 2:7** is *eucharistia*. You can hear the Greek word *charis* ("grace") within *eucharistia*. *Eucharistia* describes the attitude of "gratefulness," of "being mindful of favors received." The more our "faith" in the Lord "becomes stronger" so we can place full trust in God's will in every part of our lives, the more we will "be overflowing with thanksgiving," with *eucharistia*, for the benefits God bestows upon us through Christ, regardless of difficulties we may face.

Does anyone know what the English word "Eucharist" means? It's another word for The Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper commemorates God the Father's ultimate gift of "charis" to us, of *grace*, by sending "His One and Only Son" (**John 3:16**) to free us from sin's penalty and power. The costliness of this gift—**Jesus'** arrest, trial, and crucifixion—make God's sacrificial gift both the worst moment in human history and our best moment. It's the worst moment because it proves how fiendishly sinful human beings are capable of becoming. The most perfect Man who ever walked the Earth demonstrated a level of love, compassion, and selflessness never before seen in any one individual. Yet, He was spat upon, beaten with rods, His scalp was pierced with a crown of thorns, patches were torn from His hair and beard, much of His back and torso were reduced to a bloodied pulp by flogging; then He was crucified. Yet, despite this being the worst moment in human history, early Church leaders gave the name "The Eucharist" to the Lord's Supper. Why should His Supper be a time of "thanksgiving"? Because what **Jesus** accomplished for us by His sufferings, death, and resurrection allows a God of perfect love and goodness to forgive us, restore us to an intimate family relationship with Him, and grant us a secure place in Heaven to celebrate His grace toward us with the redeemed of all the ages! As **II Corinthians 5:21** (NCV) exquisitely proclaims, "Christ had no sin, but God made Him become sin so that in Christ we could become right with God." This is why the Lord's Supper can be said to commemorate the best moment in human history; not just the worst moment. [reread text]

Are you thankful God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were willing to pay the costliest of gifts to save you *from* Hell and *for* Heaven? Early Christians called baptism a "sacrament." In Latin, *sacramentum* was a Roman soldier's oath of absolute devotion and obedience to his general. By being baptized, the first generations of Christ's followers took a public oath of absolute devotion and obedience to be commanded by their Savior as their Lord. If you have placed your faith in **Jesus** to receive God's *gracious* gift of forgiveness and eternal life, and have sealed your faith by baptism's public oath of devotion and obedience to **Jesus** as your Savior and Lord, you are welcome to participate as we observe Christ's gift of Himself to us in His Supper.

[Hymn *Let Us Break Bread Together*]

In **I Corinthians 11:23-4, 26**, the Apostle Paul wrote, "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when He was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, ²⁴ gave thanks, broke it, and said, 'This is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.'" Thankfully receive the gracious gift of **Jesus** suffering for you by His body [Prayer; pass bread.] "In the same way, after supper He also took the cup and said, 'This cup is the new covenant established by My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'" Thankfully receive the gracious gift of **Jesus** suffering for you by His blood [Prayer; pass juice.] "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."