

## **Thanksgiving Meditation ~ November 23, 2008: Psalm 100**

Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday.

It ranks right up there with the Fourth of July. I love going home to see the members of my immediate family who manage to get together. I love to cook for them and enjoy having the time to sit down and have precious time together. I like to catch up with all the things that have been going on in their worlds.

I don't love Thanksgiving, however, just because of the food and the wonderful smells that permeate my little house on the big lake or the chance to play "Dark Tower" or the dreaded game of "Monopoly." I think I like this holiday the best, because Thanksgiving has no "ulterior motives." It is not much of a "Hallmark Moment." It is not an excuse for requiring us to exchange gifts.

This year I will be returning to Wisconsin to see members of my extended family, too. I will see my brother and sister and their families along with my two daughters who live there, as we join together on Thanksgiving Eve to celebrate the life of my brother-in-law, who passed away last Thursday, following a difficult battle with cancer. We all have our memories of him and we will express our gratitude to God for loaning him to us for a season and to him for the lessons his life has taught us.

It seems on every Thanksgiving, for many of us, there is always an empty chair at the table belonging to someone who has gone on to the next level of life. Often, we remember these people in the Thanksgiving prayer we share before we take part in our yearly feast. If it were not for many of them, we would not be around today.

Our Psalm for this morning reminds us that we need to be sure to thank God for all the good things and people that have come to us in life. Too often we like to think of ourselves as "self-made people" who need no one to lean upon. We are rugged individualists and consider it a weakness if we cannot work our own way through life. This often cuts us off from people who could and would have much value for us and who would support us. There are times we believe we struggle alone through life, not realizing that others have "been there and done that" before us, and who are willing to extend a helping hand. Thanksgiving should help us remember that we are all intertwined on this planet, we all need one another and, until we learn that important lesson, there will be no true and lasting peace on earth.

The Psalmist, in our song of thanks, reminds us that we are in God's care; we are tended to as sheep in God's pasture. This does not point to just a few of us as being the children of God, but to all people who dwell on earth. While we have times of difficulty and misunderstanding, we are all loved and cherished by our Maker. For this we should truly be grateful.

This is something our Pilgrim forefathers and mothers understood when they celebrated their first Thanksgiving dinner with the Native Americans who had helped them survive their first year in this strange, new world. They believed it was by God's grace that all of them had not died and that there was hope for their future. So, they gathered together for three days of feasting, thanksgiving and praise for the God who had brought them to the place they were. They found a new determination to go on.

Perhaps, one of those empty chairs at our tables should be for one of our Pilgrim mothers or fathers. Because of them we are here in this free land of ours. In spite of the trials and tribulations we, as a nation, have endured in the past and that we are enduring in the present, for most of us, there is no better place to be than in our country. We are as resilient as those early settlers and we will get through our present difficulties. It will take time and patience and creativity, but we will come through. We must hold to the hope generations have had before us.

So, as we “gather together to ask the Lord’s blessing” this coming Thursday, we should reflect on all it is God brought us through in the past; think of where we are in the present and trust that we have a future through the grace of God and our ability to know and understand God’s will.

*-- Amen*