

Plenty to Be Thankful For

November 23, 2014

Colossians 2:6-7

6 As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

It is almost Thanksgiving. Many of us have turkeys purchased and fixings set aside. We have travel plans set and we are picking our outfits with care to ensure plenty of tummy room for after the big meal and a day of feasting. We every year prepare and set aside time for this one day of togetherness and family and giving thanks. If any of us are familiar with the Facebook world, the month of November typically has people answering the challenge of 30 days of thanksgivings. This can be an interesting exercise if you are not familiar with it and one I myself have done for several years now some more intentionally than others. I happened across one of my friends posts that took a cynical perspective to this thanksgiving challenge. She felt that by this point in November, as it is drawing to a close, that many were just grasping for straws in regards to their Thanksgiving posts.

Her view is not alone. I invite you to watch this clip from the 1942 Irving Berlin movie, Holiday Inn. To see the scene this is actually towards the end of the Movie and Jim, played by Bing Crosby is pouting over the meal because Ted Hanover, played by Fred Astaire, has "taken" Linda Mason, played by Majorie Reynolds from him and this is not the first girl that Ted has swiped over the years.

(This clip was directly taken from the DVD for Church use and is not on youtube although it is on vimeo <http://vimeo.com/53924497> if you have access to it.)

It is a humorous song and scene with the asides that counter all the thanksgivings and has always made me giggle. Both my friend and Bing however kind of miss the point of what Thanksgiving is all about and they miss the point of what it truly means to give thanks. Many of us of late have seemingly allowed the retail rush towards the Christmas season to take over. Here is a recent internet meme that has been floating around that I share with you now.



Again a humorous portrayal of a sad reality. Many of us miss the point of Thanksgiving in our consumer driven cultural ideal of what is supposed to be the ideal celebration of the holidays. We not only are in a rush to get it over with but we also get frustrated and annoyed by the hassle of even having or traveling to Thanksgiving. The sadder thing is that Thanksgiving has become pretty foolproof if you are semi-adequate in the kitchen. You can walk into any grocery store and you will find the ideals of that perfect Thanksgiving Feast right there in easy to access endcaps so you do not even have to go down the aisle. On one is green beans, onion straws, cream of mushroom soup. On the next you find all the varieties of corn and corn meal and cans of yams and marshmallows. Still on another cans of pumpkin, pumpkin pie spice, and condensed milk. On still another bread crumbs, sage, parsley, and dried onion next to pre-packaged boxes of

'Stove-Top'. Down the meat section you find turkeys of every size and variety, hams, and even in some places the newly popular turducken. The ideal Thanksgiving meal is set for us in easy convenience. Yet, it often still ends up being a day of stressful anxiety that all the food will be prepared on time and the table set so we can sit down while watching the traditional football game for half-an-hour before beginning the clean-up and packing away of the normally overly abundant left-overs.

This recent ideal of Thanksgiving is in stark contrast to the day we are supposed to remember. I mean all of us are hopefully familiar with the story of the first Thanksgiving. The pilgrims who had come to the New World to avoid religious persecution and to obtain a fresh start were starving through their first winter but the Native American tribe near their settlement helped them through their winter with gifts of food. These same people then showed them in the Spring how to plant specific foods so that in the fall their harvest was abundant and they joined one another in a feast giving thanks for their survival and for their friendship with one another.

In our culture we have lost sight of what the day means and it has become just another day to gather and get through. There are in fact countless memes, most not appropriate for church, on ways to get through the Thanksgiving meal with our oh so wonderful family and friends. But as our scripture says and as the original day was intended: Thanksgiving calls us to be thankful for our abundance and thankful for what we have been blessed even to the point of overflowing. Thanksgivings should be as natural as sitting in a chair. They should be a normal part of our walks in faith and not regulated to one day a year. To abound in thanksgivings should be a natural expression of our faith. We should not be viewing our thanksgivings with cynicism and a glass half full perspective. We should be viewing our thanksgivings out of our abundance because we have been given so much through our belief in Jesus Christ. Our cup is not half-empty, or half-full, our cups are overflowing. Amen.