

# The November CFAMC Devotional Page

So, last year I posted a big turkey for Thanksgiving, but this year I've waited until even the leftovers are almost gone. Ah, those leftovers...

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Thanksgiving is over... but not really. Not ever.

This month for me has had tremendous ups (the CFAMC conference, for one example... I so enjoyed finally meeting and being with so many of y'all... we certainly occupied new music, eh, Jesse?) and equally profound downs (coming back from the conference to find out that the matriarch of my entire family had died the very day I had my stopover in Texas... so close, and yet so far, for one example). I come to the end of the month

exhausted, even after taking the entire of “Thanksgiving Weekend” off... and so the Devotional Page is not going to be nearly as extensive as I have planned. But, as one of my friends put it to me today, sometimes things can be short and simple:

### **John 3:16-17**

<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

<sup>17</sup>For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

That alone, every day, should be enough to make us thankful. God has granted us everlasting life with Himself in Christ, presently going on... a thankful, attentive attitude allows us to see the ways in which He is blessing us constantly, over and over again.

One of the big aspects of thanksgiving that I think we often overlook is this: OBEDIENCE. Rebellion and ingratitude are two sides of the same coin: “I don’t think what You’re asking me to do is good for me, Father, so I’m not going to do it” is not far from “I don’t see You doing anything good for me, so I’m not going to be thankful.” I had a big lesson in this on Sunday... my obedience made it possible for God to show me lots and lots and lots of extra reasons to be thankful in my church situation. But it took 14 YEARS of obedience (that is, staying at my church) before getting to Sunday. Most of us give up – even though the Holy Spirit empowers whatever He demands, so no fault on HIS part for our weakness and fickleness – long before we can reap the rewards of obedience that lead to ever more reasons for thanksgiving.

That is, our disobedience makes us ungrateful, which leads to (and is!) more disobedience, which leads to more ingratitude, which leads to more disobedience... and in this vicious cycle, we put ourselves not only more and more out of the way of blessings God wants to share with us, but also make ourselves less and less SENSITIVE to even the common graces He always shares with us. If you are breathing, you ought to be thanking God. If you can read this, there are at least eight common graces combining (you are alive, you are sitting upright, you can see, you can read, the sun is overhead or you had money to pay your electric bill, your computer is working, you know how to use it, Yahoo’s servers haven’t melted down...) for which you should be thanking God.

But so often we are thoughtless of common graces even in our most sincere moments of worship ... at our best, even with the Spirit in control, we see through a glass darkly, as the Scripture puts it. How much more our poor understanding goes into blindness in every moment of sin and ingratitude -- thus we miss countless additional opportunities for thanksgiving just in terms of COMMON graces.

And, I can’t speak for anybody else, but for me a moment of rebellious ingratitude (or ungrateful rebellion) is NOT the moment when I can appreciate God’s truly

UNCOMMON graces. Only those in Christ will understand the assurance that I have, even in the time of deep loss that I feel over the death of my last great aunt (the matriarch), that I shall not only see her again but be joined with her and all the other saints of God in His eternal praise. There are billions and billions of people, past, present, and future, who never knew or will know that grace. And yet God has shared it with us, not because we deserve better than anyone else born a rebel against Him, but by His marvelous grace. But I guarantee you: the fastest way to lose sight of such grace to get into a rebelling, ungrateful state of mind. It takes the power of the Spirit, the very mind of Christ, to grasp such graces even in the profound imperfection with which we do understand.

So, Thanksgiving continues ... we invented leftovers, but that's not God's method.

### **Lamentations 3:22-25**

<sup>22</sup>It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

<sup>23</sup>They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

<sup>24</sup>The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

<sup>25</sup>The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

Thanksgiving Day is one day out of a vast eternity in which we have been called and empowered by God to thanks-GIVING and thanks-LIVING, and sometimes I wonder if the latter call should be placed first, because our lips will manifest our life, sooner or later. This is why folks who just take Thanksgiving as a DAY can turn around on the following Friday (and sometimes by Thursday night!) and use their tongues to manifest everything BUT a grateful attitude and a dedication to obedience. Let's not go there, y'all... God has called us to a higher, sweeter, SANER level.

**1 Thessalonians 5:18** -- In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

**Philippians 4:6** -- Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Happy Thanksgiving, now and forever (which will be even HAPPIER)...