

### THANK YOU, LORD, FOR EVERYTHING

Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers. Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.

Observe the commands of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and revering him. For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.

When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

Do you know who Charles Dickens is? He is the author of many classics including *A Christmas Carol*, *Tale of Two Cities*, and *Oliver Twist*. He commented once on the American holiday of Thanksgiving. He said that the Americans have it all wrong. Instead of celebrating thanksgiving once a year, we should celebrate it 364 days out of the year and have one day dedicated to grumbling and complaining. I don't totally agree with Charles Dickens—we don't need a day dedicated to grumbling; we do that well enough alone—but he has a point. We have so much to be thankful for, one day isn't enough. It is and should be a daily thing. The theme I chose for today's sermon, *Thank You, Lord, for Everything*, is a no brainer. Any child knows that Thanksgiving is a day for thanks giving. But you will notice that I highlighted the word "everything." Our text from Deuteronomy 8 teaches us a very important lesson. We thank him for all the good things he gives us. But we also thank him for using bad things for our good.

*I. Thank you, Lord, for all your good things.*

**"For the Lord is bringing you into a good land—a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills."** (vv.7-9) You and I know that the Lord was describing the promised land to his people—and it truly was a land flowing with milk and honey. But can't these words also describe another land, our own United States?

I got some statistics from the year 1905, and I want you to compare if our blessings today are not truly great. In 1905 the average life expectancy was 47 years; only 8% of the population had a telephone and a three minute call from Denver to New York City cost eleven dollars; only 14% of the homes had a bathtub; only 6% of the population had graduated from high school; there were only 8,000 cars and only 144 miles of paved roads; the average wage was .22 cents an hour and the average yearly salary for a worker was between \$200 and \$400; 95% of births took place at the home; most women washed their hair once a month using borax and egg yolks as shampoo; the leading cause of death was pneumonia and influenza. And look at where we are now. Yes, there is inflation. Yes, there is a supply chain problem. Yes, there were times in COVID that toilet paper was back ordered. But we are so much better off. Truly the Lord has blessed us beyond compare.

But he hasn't just blessed us as a nation. Look at how he blessed us as a church and I am not talking just about freedom of religion. The devil asked in Eden, "Did God really say?" And he continues to utter such things today. Many are confused even though they have Bibles. But we belong to a church body that doesn't just hold the Bible out there, we also use it and all we do and teach is based on what God says. If someone should ask, "Does God really say," we can know for sure know as we open our Bibles. Thank God our church holds to the Bible as God's inspired, inerrant Word.

And in that Word we find our greatest blessing. He is Jesus Christ. We do not deserve to even hear about Jesus let alone to spend eternity with God in his heaven. While we were his enemies because of our sins and lawlessness, he removed the guilt of our sins with the blood of his Son, Jesus Christ. He made sure we were baptized and are exposed to his Word and Holy Communion. He leads us to repentance and forgiveness through his Word.

The Israelites received their land of milk and honey. We Christians have received even more. We have the best of both worlds, a land of milk and honey, and we have a mansion known as heaven.

*II. Thank you, Lord, for using bad things for our good!*

But are we thankful? In a perfect world we would never need a national day of Thanksgiving. But this is not a perfect world, and though we are righteous in God's eyes through Christ, we are plagued by a sinful nature. It says in our text, ". . . **then your heart will**

**become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, . . . You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’”** We are like that NASCAR driver who brags how good he is. He may be good, but he might as well race on a tricycle if it wasn't for the car, engine, tires, the mechanics, the pit crews and his sponsors. You are doing well. Good. But it is because the Lord is blessing you. **“But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth.”** Even your ability to think, work, manage comes from God.

God knows us well, and he knows how forgetful we can be. But he has ways to remind us. **“He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord disciplines you.”** When God freed his people from their slavery in Egypt, he didn't take them along the highway up to the promised land, but he led them east into the desert. In the desert there was no food, no shelter. They literally didn't know where their next was coming from. That is exactly where God wanted them to be. He wanted them to know that he will take care of them. God gave enough food one day at a time. They had to trust he will do the same tomorrow. It wasn't the manna that fed them but God's promise to feed them. That irrational detour to the wilderness humbled them. It taught them to trust God.

But the Israelites are not the only ones God treats this way. It says in Hebrews: **“Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. . . . Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”**

I cannot presume to know every hardship that has entered your life. But what comfort these words offer. God not only gives us good things, he also treats us as his very own sons and daughters; he uses bad things for our good. Why?

Let's just say I want to bake you a chocolate cake, and it will not be from a box; I am going to make it all from scratch. Sounds good, doesn't it. But how would you like it if I gave you all the ingredients one at a time? I pour out two cups of flour. Would you like eating flour all by itself? Here are a couple tablespoons of sugar. That would taste good, but I don't like plain sugar; I prefer it mixed with something else. Would you like to eat two raw eggs now? And how about a couple teaspoons of baking powder. That wouldn't taste good. Now I am not going to use melted chocolate chips for this cake; remember, it is from scratch. So here, have a few tablespoons of raw cocoa. Have you ever tried unsweetened cocoa? It tastes quite bitter. Individually, those ingredients are not appetizing. But if you put all of these ingredients together, you have one tasty, wonderful cake. In fact, you wouldn't have chocolate cake without the bitter things like baking powder and unsweetened cocoa.

It is easy for us to be thankful for the good things and regretful of the bad. But God doesn't look at it that way. Sometimes God gives us sweet things like sugar. He gives us important, nutritional things like flour. But he will also use bitter things in our life. All by themselves, they will either be sweet or bitter to the taste, but together they make a delicious cake.

What kind of cake is he making of your life? God ultimately wants us to sit with him in his heaven. For that to happen, we need to be humble and look to Jesus alone as our Savior. So God will humble us with a simple admonition from his Bible or the law to show our sins or using the troubles. We need to stick close to God, so he will trip us or let us fall down so we see him picking us up. We need to trust him, so he reminds us that man does not live on bread alone, but on the Word of God.

And so we are thankful for everything, the good God has given and how he used the bad for our good. Mix all the good and bad together, and what do you get? A delicious cake where each ingredient serves to strengthen our faith in God and to keep us close to our Savior. Amen.