



Dear Friends,

During November, we will commemorate our national holiday – Thanksgiving. Originally, Thanksgiving was celebrated among the early colonists in gratitude for material blessings of a successful harvest. This month we focus this TLO Disciple on the topic of Thanksgiving.

*The New Testament, especially in Paul's letters, frequently expresses three phases of gratitude (Specific examples can be found at 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:5; Philippians 1:3; Colossians 1:3; and Ephesians 1:15):*

First, gratitude is an attitude in the heart. As believers in Christ, we know God's gifts of grace, his undeserved love. We cannot but in trust and faith, feel grateful for what God has done and continues to do for us. For through Christ Jesus' righteous sacrifice the Holy Spirit has cleansed us from all sin in Holy Baptism and fills us with his holiness. By the power of the Holy Spirit we respond with gratitude in our hearts and thankfulness to God.

*Psalm 69:30 "I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving."*

Second, gratitude is words expressed; to thank. As believers in Christ, we do not stop with simply an attitude of gratitude. This heart of gratitude is expressed through faith with our words. Like Paul, we express our thanks for the blessings of faith when we gather for worship. As we hear God's Word, the Spirit gives utterance to our grateful hearts in our prayers, and as we sing praises with thanksgiving. We sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, not bargaining with God for earthly blessing, but with thankful hearts for the unnumbered blessings we receive from his grace now and for eternity.

*Psalm 100:4 "Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!"*

Third, gratitude is returned in actions, through our deeds. As believers in Christ, our gratitude is returned to God in actions. Paul described himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ. His motive for actively working and laboring in God's Kingdom, in spite of great opposition, was gratitude to Jesus for his grace. Paul is especially grateful for those that he calls "saints" who partnered with him in the Gospel. Like Paul, we return our gratitude as we share God's love with one another, serve side-by-side in the work of the Gospel, and witness our faith so that all can hear the Good News of Christ's love.

*Psalm 107:22 "And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!"*

This Thanksgiving holiday let's concentrate the attitudes of our hearts in gratitude not only on the material blessings of the harvest, but on the spiritual blessings that come through Christ Jesus.

*Psalm 95:2 "Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!"*

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