

**PENTECOST:
A TIME TO EXPERIENCE GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT ALIVE AND ACTIVE**

**Day of Thanksgiving
November 26, 2009**

**Joel 2:21-27
Psalm 126
1 Timothy 2:1-7
Matthew 6:25-33**

A Harvest of Thanksgiving

*Be present at our table, Lord;
Be here and everywhere adored.
These mercies bless, and grant that we
May feast in fellowship with thee.*

A Table Grace

Steamy hot dishes, traditional and new recipes, laughter, and the joy of family and friends coming together from near and far, are hallmarks of American Thanksgiving. Yet for all its camaraderie, we should never lose sight of the real reason for the celebration—gratitude for the blessings we have received. These blessings, said Abraham Lincoln as he proclaimed Thanksgiving Day a national holiday in 1863, “are the gracious gifts of the Most High God.”

In today’s Old Testament readings, both the prophet Joel and the psalmist write of the celebrations that take place when the harvest is gathered in. And both pause to give homage and thanks to God recognizing, and rightly so, that “The LORD has worked miracles for his people” (Psalm 126:2b, *CEV*), and “The LORD works wonders and does great things” (Joel 2:20b, 21a, *CEV*). The prophet also acknowledges that despite our tendency to misplace our gratitude, God reminds us, “I am the LORD your God—there are no other gods” (Joel 2:27b, *CEV*).

President Lincoln made his proclamation against a backdrop “of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity.” Today, we take our places around the table, many of us with feelings of ambivalence at wars in which we are engaged. Yet, there are other wars to be waged. The battle for our hearts and minds in this day and age is equally fierce because “we are fighting against forces and authorities and against rulers of darkness and powers in the spiritual world” (Ephesians 6:12b, *CEV*). We are fighting to maintain moral and spiritual integrity, yet all the while worrying at what cost. God’s message comes through with remarkable clarity:

Jesus said: “Don’t worry and ask yourselves, ‘Will we have anything to eat? Will we have anything to drink? Will we have any clothes to wear? ... Your Father in heaven

knows that you need all of these. But more than anything else, put God’s work first and do what he wants. Then the other things will be yours as well” (Matthew 6:31, 32b, 33, *CEV*)

What a sobering thought! “Don’t worry...put God’s work first and do what he wants.” As we place emphasis on doing what God wants, we must harness the power of prayer and pray for those “in power, so that we may live quiet and peaceful lives as we worship and honor God” (1 Timothy 2:2b, *CEV*). But, we must also be cognizant that when we devote ourselves to God’s work, it sometimes puts us in direct conflict with those who seek to do evil. It is then that we must “put on all the armor that God gives” so that “when the battle is over, [we] will still be standing firm” (Ephesians 6:13b, *CEV*).

Despite life’s difficulties, there is much to be thankful for on this Thanksgiving Day...life, health, strength, family, friends, and a God who loves us enough to supply all our needs. This is indeed cause for celebration. How can we show gratitude to God? What harvest of thanksgiving can we bring? Abraham Lincoln recommended “offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him...” and the apostle Paul puts it succinctly, giving us food for thought as he calls us to a posture of singular worship:

“There is only one God,
and Christ Jesus is the only one
who can bring us to God.”
(1 Timothy 2:5a, *CEV*)

We may be sitting at the table wearing armor, but thank God our Lord is present and we give thanks knowing “in everything we have won more than a victory because of Christ who loves us!” (Romans 8:37, *CEV*)

The Reflection for the Day of Thanksgiving was prepared by Dorette Saunders who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Senior Editor in the Education Unit of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

+ + +

On this Day of Thanksgiving, we pray for the thousands of uniformed men and women who are engaged in armed conflict or are stationed as peace-keeping forces around the world. We pray for their families and loved ones as they endure the pain of separation. We also pray for the world’s leaders that God’s spirit will enable them to make right choices so that peace and harmony will prevail. We offer prayers of thanksgiving for God’s continued care and compassion toward our nation.

Activity Corner: “A Harvest of Thanksgiving” Collage

Supplies needed: Bible; Concordance; poster board or oak tag; glue or paste; old magazines or newspapers; colored markers; scissors; glitter (optional).

Use the Concordance to find an appropriate Bible verse (try using the words “thanks, thanksgiving, harvest” for starters). Write the verse at the top of the poster. Underneath

the Bible verse write: "***A Harvest of Thanksgiving.***" Use the markers to write things you are thankful for. Decorate the board by pasting several Thanksgiving-related pictures clipped from magazines or newspapers. Decorate with glitter. Place or hang the poster where it's visible or where you gather for family devotions. Conclude by reading together Psalm 126, a communal psalm of thanksgiving for the assurance of God's provision. Sing together "We Gather Together" or "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" or one of your favorite Thanksgiving hymns of praise.