

PENTECOST: A TIME TO BE FILLED WITH GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

Thanksgiving Day
November 27, 2008

Deuteronomy 8:7-18
Psalm 65
2 Corinthians 9:6-15
Luke 17:11-19

God Is Good! Give Thanks!

*How can I give thanks for the things you have done for me?
Things so undeserved, yet you gave to prove your love for me.*
Gospel singer Andrae Crouch

Looking back, the year 2008 will be recorded as a tumultuous time—a year when many of the things we took for granted were suddenly turned upside down. Regions that never before witnessed nature's fury felt her rage in tornadoes, mudslides, hurricanes, and fires which left thousands dead in their wake. Like the account of Jesus overturning the tables of the moneychangers in the temple (John 2:13-22), our global economy has been overturned, forcing us to examine the role of greed, perfidy, and selfishness in our lives.

The church has not been left unscathed in all this. We have battled sexual impropriety, theft, greed, lapse of morals and integrity, not just in the pews, but sadly, in our pulpits. What, then, is there to give thanks for? Plenty!

God is good. Give thanks! God has provided us manifold blessings, but like the nine lepers who neglected to give thanks for their healing (Luke 17:15-18), we've forgotten the source of our blessings and have quickly returned to the day-to-day busyness of life. All our natural and spiritual resources come from God and we should "praise the LORD for his love and the wonderful things he does for all of us" (Psalm 107:8, *CEV*).

How can we give thanks? First, we do so by acknowledging God's sovereignty. He alone *is* God. He is faithful, unchanging, loving, giving *and* forgiving. He is God! We can give thanks for the special bond we share. Our relationship, as believers, allows us to call God *Abba*, father, and it assures us that we are heirs to the kingdom of heaven. With tenderness, God loves us despite our faults and our indiscretions. When our sins get us down, he stands ready to forgive us (Psalm 65:3). Who, indeed, is like the Lord?

This Thanksgiving Day, we are grateful that God is a God who answers prayer and gives us hope! "Our God... You give hope to people everywhere on earth, even those across the sea" (Psalm 65:5b, *CEV*). How very true. We see the world, people everywhere,

watching the United States, in this tumultuous time, for its cue. And now, more than ever, we have the unique opportunity to prove that we are still what our Founding Fathers envisioned: “one nation, *under God*, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

We are undeserving of God’s favor; nevertheless, he gives it to us. So, we give thanks because God is good and we can truly say that “this day belongs to the LORD! Let’s celebrate and be glad today” (Psalm 118:24).

This week’s Reflection 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.

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This day we remember to pray and give thanks and praise to God for God’s blessings. Father, we thank you for the many blessings you have given us. Truly you love us and we gratefully acknowledge your lordship in our lives. Accept the gifts we bring—gifts of gratitude for answered prayer, for healing, for hope, for your continued faithfulness to us in the midst of life’s storms, and for the opportunity to call you *Abba*, Father. Forgive us our sins and shortcomings and may our gratitude to you be reflected in our deeds to those who need you most. Amen.

Activity Corner: Thanksgiving “Praise Notes”

Supplies needed: Bible; 8-1/2” x 11” construction paper (assorted colors); stickers and/or glitter (optional); scissors; pens or pencils; markers; crayons; glue or paste; old magazines; basket (or bowl); small slips of paper.

Write the names of everyone in your household on individual pieces of paper. Fold the papers and place them in a basket or bowl. Invite everyone to draw a name and then prepare a “Praise Note” for that person. To make a praise note, fold a sheet of construction paper in half and decorate the front with stickers, glitter, or pictures cut out from magazines (or a picture may be drawn with markers or crayons). On the front write, “In Praise of You!” and on the back write, “Thank God for You!” On the inside, write a note of thanks, praising that person for something special he or she has done during the past year and letting that person know he or she is a blessing to you. Encourage everyone to “deliver” their praise notes on Thanksgiving Day and incorporate these notes into a prayer of thanksgiving during family devotional time. Conclude by reading together Psalm 65; and at the end of the reading, invite everyone to respond together, “OUR GOD, YOU DESERVE PRAISE!”

