

Question: Since most of us work hard for what I have, why should we give thanks to God as if he is totally responsible for it?

I am reminded of my all-time favorite movie “Shenandoah.” During the American Civil War, a widowed Virginia farmer, played by Jimmy Stewart, gathered his large family around the dinner table. With a commanding voice, he ordered them to bow their heads while he said grace. In this prayer he said: “Lord, we plowed the ground, we planted the seed, we harvested it, prepared it and set it on the table. If we hadn’t done it, it wouldn’t be here. But we thank you anyway, Lord.”

In the world our God has created, we have very little that comes to us without some action on our own part. This is not a world for the lazy and indifferent. The apostle Paul taught the Thessalonian Christians that if a man will not work neither should he eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Everyone is expected to carry his part of the load in life. The biblical wisdom literature also affirms this principle: “Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth” (Proverbs 10:4; cf. Proverbs 19:15; 26:15; Ecclesiastes 10:18). In the parable of the talents, Jesus told of a man who received one talent (money) and failed to take any action with it. His master said to him: “You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest” (Matthew 25:26-27). Jesus also said that the talent was taken from the man, and he was cast out into the darkness.

However, our ability to work, earn and accomplish anything comes only because of the generosity of our Heavenly Father. It is he who has given us life and all the resources that make everything else possible. Apart from the things which God has given us, we can do nothing. Yes, the farmer must plow the ground, plant the seed and harvest the produce; but God first gave him the ground, put fertility in the soil, made the seed to germinate and provided the sun and rain to nourish the crop. In the parable of the talents, each one was first given his talents by the master before he could do anything. The work we humans do is necessary, but our actions are quite insignificant compared to what God has first done for us. The privilege of cooperating with

God in the process of his blessing us so richly is itself a wonderful gift of his grace. As the Bible declares, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights” (James 1:17). The apostle Paul assured the Philippians that he could do everything needed, but only through Christ who gave him the strength (Philippians 4:13).

Why should you give thanks? King David answered for us: “Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand” (1 Chronicles 29:10-14).

May we never become so proud of what we have done or can do that we do not have the humility to say thank you to our Heavenly Father. I pray you will have a happy and thankful Thanksgiving weekend.

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