

**ERIC BUTTERWORTH
PAPERS (3014)**

BOX 26

FOLDER 46

A THANKSGIVING

SOLILOQUY

NOVEMBER 21, 1993

11/21/93

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PROLOGUE:

"COME YE THANKFUL PEOPLE COME" The fine old Christian hymn may give rise in you to the image of the classic portrayal of the first American Thanksgiving - with the Pilgrims in their starched white collars, seated at the lavishly provisioned table with the friendly Indians. But we have short memories, and this event was 373 years ago. Looking backward we tend to remember the best and forget the rest. Realistically, it was a pitiful group of survivors of many months of extreme hardship and suffering, who had seen their little band increasingly reduced in size as the burial plot claimed more and more of their numbers. And...at this feast there was very little food on the table and precious little in their barns -- with the prospects of another hard winter ahead. Thus actually the Pilgrims had little to give thanks for. So what possible good does this depressing vignette of early American history offer for we moderns?

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One person was heard to say recently, "I am not into Thanksgiving this year. With my situation, what do I have to give thanks for?" That is precisely the question the Pilgrims could have asked at the table on that first Thanksgiving Day. But that they were there at all gives the implication of a new meaning of the word thanksgiving. They had little to give thanks for, but they were giving thanks from the conviction of the goodness and all-sufficiency of God...which was a measure of their great faith. It was this conviction that brought them to America in the first place, and which would sustain them in the years ahead.

We need to recognize that Thanksgiving, like Christmas, is often approached on the level of things. What did you get for Christmas? What things do you have to give thanks for?

How do you give thanks to God? Traditionally it was believed that God was the great Lord of the Heavens and the Earth, and as subjects, we were to bow our heads and bend our knees in worship. It is interesting that the word worship comes from the Hebrew word, "PROSKOONEO", literally meaning, "To lick at the heels like a dog." This is obviously a carry-over of earlier pagan times and idle worship. The spiritual giants of the Bible, from the prophets up to Jesus, were devoted to the "Joyous Cosmology" in which people would understand that God is the Allness in which you

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You worship God by consciously becoming the energy of God in motion. You thank God by becoming a positive instrument of God, "opening out a way whence the imprisoned splendor may escape," We could say that "Thinking good is thanking God." You praise God by raising your consciousness of God's presence, and by raising your perception of God in all persons, thus raising the God-energy in them. We could say that praise is Thanksgiving in action.

Get the message of the Pilgrims. They were not giving thanks for what was on their table, or what they had stored in their barns, for they were at a near famine level. No, they were giving thanks for what was in their hearts. The new insight into Thanksgiving calls for a de-emphasis on what you have to give thanks for... and a focusing on what you have to give thanks from. Think about your roots, think about the creative flow, think about your own divine identity. When you focus on what you have to give thanks from, you have the Allness of God to give thanks from, you have the whole Universe to give thanks from. "Come ye blessed, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This inner Kingdom, the indwelling "field of dreams", is always yours to give thanks from.

Thanksgiving is not a virtue for which you receive heavenly "Brownie points." And actually....it makes no difference to God whether you give thanks to him or not. Your praise and gratitude are not for him... He doesn't need it... But you do. Meister Eckhart: "I never thank God for loving me... He can't help himself." For His love is based on principle. According to the divinity in me, I am part of the great heart of God. Thus the prophet records God saying to you and me, "Behold, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." But you and I need to be grateful. It is as important to our well-being as breathing.

Long before the time of Jesus, in ancient Greece, Plato said, "He enjoys much who is thankful. A grateful mind is a great mind which eventually attracts to itself great things." Thus giving thanks is actually a giving way to the divine flow.

You may be interested to know that the Bible does not call for a special day of thanksgiving. Paul says, "In all things give thanks." In other words the goal is to live in a perpetual consciousness of thankfulness...and that is not easy.

Carlyle says, "Every day born into the world comes like a burst of music, and you shall make of it a dance, a dirge, or a life-march as you will." We always have that choice. We can engage in thank-thinking or in lamentation.

Now thank-thinking is not something to engage in on Thanksgiving Day alone. The holiday is not just a day on which you do certain things. It is a certain way you deal

with all things every day. As with everything in Truth, it boils down to attitudes.

One man who lived on the edge of his town would climb to the top of a hill in back of his property, at the close of every day...ostensibly for exercise and to see the sunset...but actually to do his "thank-thinking." He would subject himself to a critique of his day, the events that had transpired - but in the Aristotelean sense of criticism (looking for the good). He would take literally the words of Jesus, "Let not the sun go down on your wrath." He would take inventory of the thoughts and feelings he had experienced...the hurts, the anger, the worry...and all kinds of negativity, taking personal responsibility for such actions. He would say, "I am not my emotions. I have emotions and in the divinity within me I can control my emotions. I am not my thoughts. I am the thinker of my thoughts, and there is that within me that can control my thoughts, and think the kind of thoughts that I want to see manifest in my life."

Some would call this Pollyanna...but why? We don't consider it Pollyanna to devote the whole day once a year to "count our blessings." If it is good enough for one day...why not for all the days of the year?"

Thank-thinking is seeing things from a high vantage point. Emerson on prayer says, "For what is prayer but the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view." True prayer is simply high level thinking. So wherever there is a problem, climb the high hill of consciousness and engage in some thank-thinking....give thanks...give way to the flow.

I was reading recently of a psycho-therapy that is popular and widely used in Japan. It is called NAIKAN. It is a one week intensive assault on the psyche. The individual will spend their days virtually alone in a room, speaking to no one other than the therapist who visits them several times during each day. One day will be spent remembering their mother, working with a log book in which they have recorded specific instances of her acts of devotion to them. Another day the patient may deal with their father, or their teachers or mentors, those who have had a pronounced influence on their life. It is very simplistic, spending long hours contemplating their ingratitude, and feeling grateful for the good. At the end of the week the patient emerge from the room to re-enter life dedicated to repaying this their debt to those who have been so kind, an attitude that seems to catapult them from the margin to the center of life. This may seem odd to Americans, but it speaks directly to the Japanese soul, and it may speak volumes of the differences between our cultures.

The therapy of Naikan is difficult to explain to Westerners, but it is a way to honor the basic love and nurturance we've gotten from parents, teachers, friends -- all the people who have helped us along the way. But whatever we think of the Naikan technique in therapy...it does emphasize the importance of the attitude of gratitude.

Do you recall that line in John 7: "And they went every man into his own house, but Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives." I used to read this with pity. How could the

disciples draw upon his supportive consciousness all day, and then leave him inhospitably out in the night, where it says he "had nowhere to lay his head." I used to visualize an imaginary scenario: The disciples greeted by their families, going in to savory meals, the bed made and the pillow fluffed...While out on the hills Jesus was alone with no place to go. But now I see it differently. It could be that the disciples tossed and turned in worried and tense sleeplessness, while Jesus, with a mountain for a pillow, was busily engaged in his practice of the Presence. Jesus did not achieve his power by occasional attempts to perform miracles. His victory in Gethsemane was no sudden surge of courage. When he lifted up his eyes and gave thanks, like the performing artist here on the stage of Avery Fisher Hall, it is a bearing of the fruit of long years of discipline and practice.

When you develop a disciplined attitude of gratitude you become possessed of an amazing perception of life. You behold the divinity in people and the inherent good in all circumstances. As Plato said, "You have a great mind that attracts to itself great things."

One aspect of Thanksgiving that is rarely addressed is thanks-GIVING. It is only when you live in a giving consciousness that you live up to your divinity. You are the Universe giving itself freely as you. Jesus said, "The Father works until now, and I work." And we need to see that the Universe gives until now, and I give.

A vital part of this service of creative worth-ship is the offering basket which provides an opportunity for each person to share in the partnership of Truth-seekers at the Unity Center is. It is your time of thanks-Giving, I always feel a little sad when I observe people leaving at the end of the lecture. The experience of "worth-ship" is not over. The "thank giving" privilege has not been accepted. And at the close of the service we register our gratitude for the Truth received by joining in a great projection of consciousness to all peoples in the world. It is a large part of why we are here.

If you want to catch the message of Truth that we share here on Sundays, open your mind and heart in gratitude. And as the warm feeling of thanksgiving wells up within you, it will lead to an act of giving. Don't let it go until you have given way to the Universal flow in some kind of sharing. It is the Supreme act of worthship. The offering basket is the symbol of Universal law working in your life. And as you give you shall receive. If the process of dedicated giving is missing in your life, it will account for a lack of continuity of good in your experience. Things never quite work out, something always happens, the deal falls through, the jobs disappear, the funds are never quite adequate. This is no accident. It is Universal law at work. Make this year the time you apply the giving of Thanksgiving and experience a breakthrough into the abundant life.

Living in a perpetual attitude of gratitude would lead to respect for property, and a deep respect for people - all people. Most of all it would lead to a healthy self-respect and a feeling of self-worth.

Thus, an important element of Thanksgiving is appreciation of oneself. Georgiana Tree West tells of shocking some of her elders at a festive family thanksgiving dinner. They took turns around the table to tell something they were thankful for. When it was her turn little Georgiana said, "I'm thankful for myself." Bu she was wiser than they knew, for she was thankful that she had been born to run in the bright sunshine, to see the sunlight and flowers and pretty stars at night, that she could read her storybooks and learn about the wonderful world around her. She really meant it...she was thankful for herself. As Skippy used to say. "I'm all I have!"

There is an old saying that a donkey may carry a load of precious sandalwood on its back without knowing its preciousness; all he knows is the weight.

Many of us go through life feeling only the weight of circumstances, never able to know the precious nature of life - simply because we have a chronic negative attitude. I often think of the inspiring conclusion of Rostand's play, "The Chanticleer", and of that noble rooster who thought it was because of his cock-crow in the morning that the sun rose! Morning after morning therefore he got up early and crowed...and indeed the sun did rise! But one day he overslept, and when he arose he found the sun had risen and he had not crowed. It was a great disillusionment to him, and led to feelings of self-doubt and insufficiency. How ineffective his life was! And then he had a great inspiration: "It may be that it is not my poor voice that brings on the day; but this at least I can do, and nothing can deprive me of the joy of it; If I may not cause the sun to rise, I may lift up my voice and celebrate its rising."

Here is a key-note of Thanksgiving. Some people may do great things and have much in the way of health and possessions...thus seemingly have much to be grateful for and have much reason for Thanksgiving. But even if we do not have much, nor can do much, we can rejoice in what others have, and in what others can do, and celebrate the abundance of life. Perhaps this is what true affluence is...the ability to celebrate all the abundance of the Universe.

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I challenge you to make this coming Thanksgiving Day a time of celebration. Celebrate the affluence of the Universe, and the free flow of substance and life and intelligence

in you. Don't dwell too long on counting your blessings in a thing-oriented way...for if you have little, you may find yourself counting you envies in self-pity and resentment. Review what you have to give thanks from...the knowledge that you are a spiritual being in a spiritual Universe, guided and governed and sustained by spiritual law. Remember that the Kingdom of God is always within you, a field of dreams in which you can do or have anything that you can conceive and believe.

Thanksgiving - with the Pilgrims in their starched white collars, seated at the lavishly prepared table with the friendly Indians - But we have short memories, and the event was 372 years ago. Looking backward we tend to remember the best and forget the rest. Realistically, it was a pitiful group of survivors of many months of extreme hard-ship and suffering, who had seen their little band increasingly reduced in size as the brutal cold claimed more and more of their numbers. And...at this feast there was very little food on the table and precious little in their barns - with the prospects of another hard winter ahead. Thus, actually the Pilgrims had little to give thanks for. So what possible good does this depressing vignette of early American history offer for us moderns?

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We need to recognize that Thanksgiving, like Christmas, is often approached on the level of things. What did you get for Christmas? What things do you have to give thanks for?

How do you give thanks to God? Traditionally it was believed that God was the great Lord of the Heavens and the Earth, and as subjects, we were to bow our heads and bend our knees in worship. It is interesting that the word worship comes from the Hebrew word, "PUSKOCNEO", literally meaning, "To sink at the heels like a dog." This is obviously a carry-over of earlier pagan times and the worship. The spiritual giants of the Bible, from the prophets up to Jesus, were devoted to the "Love of

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