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BOX 26

FOLDER 77

**THE THANKSGIVING
PERSPECTIVE**

NOVEMBER 19, 1995

11/19/95

THE THANKSGIVING PERSPECTIVE

This coming Thursday is Thanksgiving Day. A legal Holiday... Time off work... **but** there is no special legacy that accrues to us by reason of being alive on November 23rd. It will be a day like any other day. The Sun will rise as usual. And as usual, few of us will even notice it.

Actually, having a day of thanksgiving is very convenient. It provides the way for what we could call "Short order piety." You may have a total lack of thankfulness, a perpetual attitude of ⁱⁿ⁻gratitude. **But** on one day of the year you do thanksgiving, counting your blessings over one by one, generally feeling grateful all day long for good things and happy relationships.

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Then on Friday, having "done" Thanksgiving, you go back to work... and possibly, back to the practice of commiserating over your physical problem, your financial burdens, the low compensation in your work, the crime and violence that are so much a part of the daily scene.

I have observed, tongue in cheek, that it might be more appropriate to have an annual "tribulation day," spending one whole day "tribulating." Thus spending a full day griping and complaining and revealing the very "nth" degree of ingratitude. Then going back to a glorious year of the 364 remaining days of living with an enthusiastic attitude of gratitude.

Now It is important that in observing Thanksgiving we are not just playing games. It is not a matter of taking a day to sing our praises to God. God isn't the least bit moved by your flattery. Really, it makes no difference to God whether we thank Him or not. God doesn't require our thanks, and will not sit sulking over our ingratitude.

Meister Eckhart, that medieaval parish priest who had such a wonderful insight into God, said, "I never thank God for loving me. He can't help himself." Praise and thanksgiving are not for God.

There is a tendency to think of thanks-giving as relative to the ^{how much} amount God has given you.

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The first American Thanksgiving by the Pilgrims would seem to be a paradox. When they sat at the table with the Indians, they actually had little food on the table and precious little in their barns - with prospects of a hard winter ahead and with their little burial plot on the hill being steadily filled by the increasing numbers of their band being decimated by disease and hunger.

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The pilgrims had little to give thanks for. But the question is, "What did they have to give thanks from?" They were giving thanks from the conviction of the goodness and all-sufficiency of God. This faith brought them to America and would sustain them in the years ahead.

So, What do you have to give thanks from? It is the call to turn within and acknowledge your oneness with the divine flow no matter what appearances say to the contrary.

The New Testament records the experience of Paul and Silas who were wrongfully imprisoned by the Roman authorities for "dangerous teachings". They were thrown into a dungeon and manacled in chains.

Thanksgiving is a call to acknowledge the principle of the allness of God and the all-sufficiency of substance. It is not a virtue for which you win "brownie points." It is an attitude that lifts you to the highest level of consciousness, which in turn enables you to experience the highest kind of life.

You see, you do not have to have things for which to be grateful. The grateful person is great because they have turned the lights on in themselves. When ~~we~~ we do give thanks we radiate light to see things for which ~~we~~ we can be grateful.

Maybe this is what true greatness is..the ability to appreciate the good in people and events.. and to exact the best from life.

Thanksgiving is not just a reactionary emotion, but a causative force. It is a way of getting attitude in your thought processes.

The New Testament records the experience of Paul and Silas who were wrongfully imprisoned by the Roman authorities for "dangerous teachings." They were thrown into a dungeon and manacled in chains.

And it says, "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise and thanksgiving."

Suddenly there was an earthquake and the foundations of the prison were shaken and the doors were opened and the shackles fell off. The word of thanksgiving was instant and powerful. And the word of your thanksgiving will free you from your chains.

Emerson defines prayer as "the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view."

If you can get a view from high enough up and see from the perspective of wholeness, you will be able to deal easily and efficiently with life. Your perspective will work wonders for you, freeing you from all limitations

A wonderful man I once knew lived at the foot of a hill in a small western town. At the close of every day he would climb up to his favorite perch, ostensibly for exercise and to see the sunset. But really to do some thank-thinking (as he called it) to get his thoughts sorted out. He would have a critique of his day - in the Aristotelean sense of criticism. "Looking for the good."

Paul says (to the Ephesians) "Let not the sun go down on your wrath." Root out all hurts, worry, negativity. Resolve them all by "thank-thinking."

A. J. Cronin, British medical doctor who in his later years became a best-selling novelist, tells of a doctor in South Wales who prescribed what he called a "thank-you" cure in certain cases. When a patient came to him discouraged, blue, and full of woes, and yet without symptoms of anything physically wrong, the doctor would write out on prescription pads -- "For six weeks say 'thank you' whenever anyone does you a favor, and to show you mean it, emphasize the words with a smile."

The patient would invariably return in six weeks with a new outlook free from the sense of unhappiness that stemmed from a conviction that people were opposed to them. and incidently with the mysterious symptoms gone too.

Now, let's get one thing clear -- we are not saying that you should simply try to be grateful. To try to be is not to be. It is centering yourself at the root of your being, where you are filled with the essence of greatness.

At this stil point within you thanksgiving is the language of the soul. Anything less than an attitude of gratitude is a frusration of the creative flow. Shakespeare sings that the "winter's wind is not as unkind as man's ingratitude." One who has a thankless heart is usually a cold, unhappy, and disliked person.

There is something ugly about ingratitude. A business man, on his way to his office, always greeted an old man who stood on the corner selling shoe-laces. Once or twice a week for many years the man would stop and give the old fellow a quarter, but would never take the shoe laces. One day he made his usual gift of a quarter, and the shoelace salesman said, "I'm sorry sir, the price of shoe-laces has gone up to 40 cents."

There is an interesting account 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. Seeing the disciples greeted by their families after a hard day discipling, having a savory meal, a relaxed evening followed by a night of rest in a comfortable bed. Jesus was alone, no place to go.

How wrong! ^{THAS} The disciples may be tossing fitfully, but Jesus had a mountain for a pillow, getting his thaksgiving perspective.

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Later when he demonstrated miracle-working power, it didn't just happen. Like a great musical artist on this stage, the virtuoso performance is the result of a life-time of commitment and practice and discipline.

We need to keep this in mind when reading the story of ^{the} raising of Lazarus from the dead, and the feeding of 5000 people from one boy's lunch. In both cases it says, "He lifted up his eyes and gave thanks." The people probably wondered what there was to give thanks for? He was giving thanks from an awareness of the divine flow - giving way to its expression. The beautiful part of getting altitude in your thinking is that it enables you to begin to really appreciate your ability to appreciate.

So many persons when looking for things to give thanks for, become more aware of lack and of their own inadequacies. Thus, subtly, they count their envies one by one. "He's so talented!" "She has so many lovely things." "Wouldn't it be wonderful to be so creative!"

I have always loved "The Chanticleer" that literary creation of Rostand, the French dramatist poet. You may remember the rooster thought that it was his crowing at dawn that caused the sun to rise. Every morning he would arise at dawn and position himself for his performance. As he crowed, the sun would rise and bring on the light of day. He had a great sense of purpose, his life had meaning.

But one day he overslept, and woke up to find that the sun had already risen. It was a crushing blow. Now he felt his life had no meaning. Then in a flash of insight, he thought, "It may be that it is not my poor voice that brings on the day; but even if I may not cause the sun to rise, I may lift my voice and celebrate its rising."

It is a marvelous insight into thanksgiving as a positive power. If you get that view from the top, you realize that you can appreciate great things and be grateful that you can. You can celebrate the abundance that is everywhere, no matter whose life it may appear in.

What would Art Museums be without art enthusiasts?
Or a symphony orchestra without music lovers?
We can't all paint or sew or compose or sing or play.
But we can celebrate the creative works wherever
they spring forth. Maybe appreciation is the greatest
kind of creativity. And maybe affluence is not just the
free flow of substance into your life. But the ability
to celebrate all the abundance in the Universe,



Whenever you get the Thanksgiving perspective, the
view from the top, you will be filled with a sense of
the greatness of God that is present. And in that
attitude you become great. And great things follow
great thoughts that come from a grateful heart.

Carlyle says, "Every day born into the world comes
like a burst of music and rings itself all the day
through and thou shalt make of it a dance, a dirge,
or a life-march, as thou wilt." We always have that
choice! We can engage in thank-thinking or
lamentation. And how we think will determine how
things will unfold for us. Without thank-thinking we
become little people, with little minds, leading little
inconsequential lives.

Become a dedicated thank-thinker. It will give new meaning to your Thanksgiving. Not just one day to thank God, but a time to make a commitment to the thank-thinking habit.

Climb the high hill every day to sort out your thoughts to look for the good in persons and experiences, to get the thanksgiving perspective.