



## ***REFLECTIONS***

**Praise the Lord.**

**How good it is to sing praises to our God,  
how pleasant and fitting to praise him!**

*Psalm 147:1*

### **Thanksgiving**

The struggles were many, the risks were high, and the conditions were difficult. But the desire for new beginnings stood stronger than all of those. The freedom to worship God stood stronger still. So in the year 1621, a small community of people, remembered in history as the Pilgrims, found themselves gathered together rejoicing and giving thanks to God for their many blessings.

Edward Winslow was one of them. His hand written account is the only surviving description of that first Thanksgiving. From him we learn that the harvest was complete and the Governor had sent men to hunt geese, duck, and turkey; and that their one-day hunt produced almost a week's food supply. About ninety Native American guests, once hostile toward the Pilgrim newcomers, were welcomed into the festivities; and with them they brought their bounty of five deer to add to the ensuing three-day celebration and feast. Winslow summed up the festival this way.

*“And although it be not always so plentiful, as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want, that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.”*

Since that first Thanksgiving, our nation has allotted time to pause to give thanks to God for his countless blessings. Yet with so many distractions in our lives, our blessings are often overlooked or taken for granted. And even when we stop to remember them, our attention is easily drawn away from the real source of them all.

So, on this Thanksgiving Day, let us pause to count our blessings, large and small. Let us not forget the abundance of food accessible to us, the healthcare services and protections provided, the peacekeepers that make our streets safe, and the education opportunities available. Let us remember the love of family and of friends we hold dear. And let us give thanks for our country and the many lives given that we might be free.

We are a blessed people *“so far from want, that we often wish [other] partakers of our plenty.”* So on this very special day, let us recall the words of Abraham Lincoln in his 1863 Thanksgiving Proclamation. *“No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God...”*

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## Thanksgiving Prayer

*Loving God, we pause this day to praise you and to give thanks for our many blessings. Too often we allow them to be overshadowed amidst the troubles we face in this world. Too often our attention is drawn to our own pain or to selfish desires. But we come to you today in humble thanksgiving for the blessings you have given.*

*We thank you for life itself. You have blessed us with our being, you have given us people to love and people who love us, and most of all you have showered us with the blessing of your love.*

*We thank you for all that is yet to come. Even with the hardships and pain we may face, you bless us by using our lives as examples for the loved ones that surround us. And you bless us with the strength you provide to endure those difficult days.*

*Gracious God, we thank you for our world—for color and shapes that paint the beauty of the earth that our eyes behold, for sounds that broadcast the music of life to our ears, and for the fragrances that bring hunger for life to our souls.*

*We are blessed to live in this country, by the prosperity we enjoy, and by the security we so often take for granted. We thank you for the communities we live in, the friends we enjoy, and for all of those who sacrificed their lives that we may live in freedom. We give you thanks for the security offered by police forces and firefighters; and for those who care for our health. We are grateful for their ever growing abilities to treat traumas and diseases that once shortened human life spans.*

*Memories that remind us of yesterday are blessings of today. Memories of good times bless us with smiles. Memories of trying times bless us by helping us grow. We have been blessed by all that has gone before us; and we will be blessed by whatever may lie ahead. But most of all we are blessed by today.*

*Today we praise you our gracious and loving God; and we offer this prayer of thanksgiving in the name of your Son and our Savior, Jesus the Christ. He is the greatest blessing of them all. By the sacrifice of his body and blood all of our wrongs have been made right. And we have been blessed with life everlasting.*

*All praise to you, our Loving God.*

*Amen.*

*“You are the light of the world.”*

*Richard +*

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