

1 Chron 29:10-22a A Pattern for Thanksgiving

Traditions often come from historical patterns; we follow the examples of those who came before us.

The Thanksgiving holiday is one such tradition. History tells us that the Pilgrims celebrated a day of thanksgiving after a fruitful harvest in December 1621.

The grateful Pilgrims declared a three-day feast to thank God and to celebrate with their Indian friends. Ninety Wampanoag Indians joined the fifty Pilgrims for three days of feasting, play, and prayer. They enjoyed eating fish, lobsters, turkey, cornbread, berries, venison, and other foods. The young Pilgrim and Wampanoag men engaged in races, wrestling matches, and other athletic events. And the Pilgrims thanked God for his generous provision. This celebration and its accompanying activities were the origin of the holiday that Americans now celebrate each November.¹

We follow the tradition of thanksgiving in American history, but we may also look to a much older tradition of thanksgiving we find in the Bible. That's what I want to do today.

In 1 Chronicles 29, we find David, Solomon, and all the people of Israel celebrating the transition from the rule of King David to the rule of Solomon. After David's death, Solomon would build the temple. David had prepared all the building materials needed for the construction of the temple, and all the people gathered to celebrate the beginning of this great project.

David's expression of praise to the Lord serves as a template or pattern for how we may express our thanksgiving to God. This biblical event was not the basis of our Thanksgiving holiday, and it really doesn't have anything to do with a good harvest. But I think David's expression of thanksgiving and praise sets a good pattern that we may follow during our Thanksgiving celebration. They were giving thanks to God for what he had done for them, and we do the same on Thanksgiving Day.

Vs. 13 – this is an expression of thanksgiving and praise.

What do we learn from this pattern of thanksgiving?

¹ David Barton, "Celebrating Thanksgiving in America."

I. Give thanks to God; i.e., know to Whom you are giving thanks

Illus.: We have a whole stack of children’s Thanksgiving books at home, and it’s remarkable how *infrequently* those books mention the fact that the Pilgrims and others were thankful to God for how He had blessed them.

I think Thanksgiving is one of those holidays that the culture is now rather ashamed of. Being thankful is a Christian virtue; and Thanksgiving Day begs the question, “To whom are we giving thanks?” Some suggest that the Pilgrims were thanking the Indians. I’m sure they were thankful to their Indian friends, but that first thanksgiving was in recognition of what God had done for them. It seems like many in the culture today are ashamed of the idea that we return thanks to God.

Being ashamed of God is relatively new in America. Americans used to be quite unashamed of the fact that we ought to thank God for his blessings.

Example: who do you suppose said this?

[I] appoint ... a day of public Thanksgiving to Almighty God ... to [ask] Him that He would ... pour out His Holy Spirit on all ministers of the Gospel; that He would ... spread the light of Christian knowledge through the remotest corners of the earth; ... and that He would establish these United States upon the basis of religion and virtue. GOVERNOR THOMAS JEFFERSON, 1779

That’s exactly what we should be doing on Thanksgiving Day—thanking God and praying that he would bless our country by strengthening the foundation of religion and virtue.

In our text today, David blessed the LORD—Yahweh, the covenant God of “Israel.” David knew to whom he was giving thanks.

Note a couple of things about the way we give thanks to God.

A. Give thanks for God’s character/attributes—who he is.

1. David lists several of God’s attributes or characteristics—eternality, omnipotence, and glory.
2. The primary concept here is God’s sovereignty, i.e., his power and control over all things. We should be thankful that God reigns over all.

- a) God is “our father, forever and ever.” A father is an authority, he is in charge, the is the creator.
- b) God’s is great, powerful, and glorious.
- c) God owns everything—all that is in heaven and earth belongs to God.
- d) God owns the kingdom; he’s head above all; he reigns over all.
- e) God has power and might in his hand.
- f) .14 “all things come from thee...”

God owns all things, controls all things, and reigns over all things. That’s what we mean by sovereignty.

As Paul says in Romans 11:36, *of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever.*

We ought to be thankful that God is in charge of the universe. In spite of the fact that it may appear to us that the world is spinning out of control, we affirm with David that God reigns over all things and that his purposes cannot fail. We thank God for his glory, power, and sovereignty.

B. Give thanks for what God provides—what he does.

1. .12 riches and honor come from God.
 - a) If we have wealth and plenty, if came from God. We could easily all be living in poverty.
 - b) If we have a good reputation, we should thank God for it.
2. .12 God makes great and gives strength to all. If we have a decent job/career and relatively good health, we should be thankful.

Acts 17:25 ... *[God] gives to all life, breath, and all things.*

Trans: Thanksgiving is a time of returning thanks to God. We ought to be thankful to others as well, but in particular and especially, Thanksgiving is a time to thank God for who he is and what he has done.

II. Be humble .14-15 “Who am I?”

David recognized how unworthy he and his people were to receive God’s blessings.

A. We are strangers and sojourners. Strangers and sojourners don’t own the land, they are just visiting, just passing through.

Leviticus 25:23 [God said,] *the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me.*

B. .15end We are temporary and mortal. Life is like a vapor that appears briefly and then vanishes away.

Psalm 8:4 *What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?*

Ps 103 says that we are “dust.”

App: We are not worthy of all the blessings we enjoy. We have nothing to commend us to God. We are nobodies who are here today and gone tomorrow.

Giving thanks to God is a way of affirming that we are getting more than we deserve. We should be very thankful for all the good things God allows us to enjoy, because we don’t deserve any of it.

III. Offer willingly unto God .16-17, 21

A biblical way of expressing our thanksgiving to God is to give something in sacrifice for the Lord in recognition of his goodness to us.

How do we give willingly unto God?

A. .16 Be generous. David mentions “all this store” – i.e., all the materials they had prepared to use in the building of the temple.

If we check the first part of the chapter, we find that David had dedicated many millions of dollars’ worth of gold, silver, brass, wood, iron, and precious stones for the building and beautifying of the temple. Building the temple was a very costly project, and David and the people gave generously to this effort.

- B. .16b Admit that all you have comes from God – “all this...cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own.” Cf. 14end

James 1:17 tells us that *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights...*

1 Corinthians 4:7 ... *what do you have that you did not receive?*

God has given us everything we have. No doubt, we work to earn a living; we buy things with the money we earn. But God gives us the power, strength, and knowledge to earn a living. All we have comes from God’s gracious hand. And when we give back to the Lord, we are giving what he gave us. God is the rightful owner of everything.

Psalms 24:1 *The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.*

- C. .17 Be sincere. “in the uprightness of mine heart.” The Bible says that “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7).

- D. .14a, 17b Offer willingly. Under the OT sacrificial system, the occasion described in this passage would probably be an example of the thank offering. People who were especially thankful for some blessing would offer a special thanksgiving offering to the Lord.

Our giving to the Lord is voluntary; no one is going to force you to give. We ought to give freely, from a heart of gratitude, willingly.

In the same passage where it says that God loves a cheerful giver, it also says that we should not give “grudgingly or of necessity,” i.e., resentfully, like paying your taxes or pay a fine.

- E. .21 Offer abundantly

The text mentions that David and the people offered sacrifices in abundance.

App: How does this set a pattern for us? We can do the same thing—give to the Lord generously, sincerely, willingly, and abundantly.

We don’t offer sacrifices like the OT saints did. We offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus. Praise and thanksgiving is a way of offering spiritual sacrifices to God.

Hebrews 13:15 *Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.*

And we can give financially to the Lord as an expression of thanks. In Phil 4:18, Paul describes a financial offering as a sweet-smelling sacrifice, acceptable and well-pleasing unto God. If you are thankful for God's blessings, an offering is a suitable way to show it.

The principle is that we give back to God what he has so generously and graciously given us. When we do that, we are showing our gratitude for giving us what we have.

Just to speak bluntly, if you have had a good year financially, it would be appropriate to give a thanksgiving offering as a way of expressing your appreciation for how the Lord has blessed you. That fits this pattern. Follow David's example of generous giving to the Lord.

IV. Obey the Lord .19

A. "keep thy commandments ..."

B. "do all these things"

App: One of the ways we can show our thanks to God is to obey his commandments. Living *disobediently* after God has blessed you so generously is the height of ingratitude. If we appreciate God's blessings, we would strive to obey his commands.

V. Worship the Lord .20

- A. It's entirely appropriate to set aside a special time of worship specifically to offer thanks and praise to God for all the blessings we enjoy.

We're doing that today, and we'll do more on Tuesday night.

- B. You may remember that Abe Lincoln issued a Thanksgiving Proclamation in 1863, in which he said:

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things [i.e., the good things that happened during the Civil War]. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, ... to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens.

- C. You perhaps are not aware that G. Washington issued a thanksgiving proclamation in 1789, after Congress approved the Bill of Rights. Congress then "recommended a day of public thanksgiving and prayer" to thank God for blessing America. President Washington declared November 26, 1789, as the first national day of prayer and thanksgiving to the Lord. Congress made Thanksgiving a national holiday in 1941.

Thanksgiving is supposed to be a day set aside for thanksgiving, praise, and prayer. I hope you take some time during the Thanksgiving holiday to offer thanksgiving and praise "to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens."

It's rather odd that in our culture, we usually have our special service of worship and thanksgiving *before* the day set apart for that. Thanksgiving Day itself is usually a day of family activities, food, and football. On the Day itself, we perhaps do very little in the way of thanking and praising God for his goodness to us. Make sure to take some time on that day for praise and thanks to God. What better way to do that than...

- VI. .22a Have a banquet. There's a pattern that we all can enjoy.
- A. They ate and drank before the Lord with great gladness. Banqueting is biblical. If God has blessed us with abundant resources, it's perfectly acceptable to host a feast, throw a celebration.
 - B. Note the expression "before the Lord." They were eating and drinking in God's presence, as if he were a guest at the banquet.

Song (Doxology tune): Be present at our table, Lord; be here and everywhere adored; thy creatures bless, and grant that we; may feast in paradise with thee.

We should consider God to be a silent guest at our Thanksgiving tables. When God's people gather to celebrate God's goodness, God is present with them.
 - C. We should also remember what Jesus said about hosting a feast. We should remember the poor, the blind, and the lame. Think of those who don't often enjoy banquets and invite them over to enjoy Thanksgiving with you.

I hope your thanksgiving holiday is a time of abundant food and gladness. I think it's good for us to follow the tradition given to us by the Pilgrims and others.

But remember why we have the food and gladness. The Pilgrims, Washington, and Lincoln knew to whom they were giving thanks. They were not ashamed to express their thanksgiving to almighty God, our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens.

Everything we have comes from God. He reigns over all things and provides for us generously. He deserves the glory, power, victory and majesty. Everything in heaven and earth is his, and he is exalted as head over all. That's why we should be thankful, and that's what we should be celebrating on Thanksgiving Day. As David said,

1Ch 29:13 *Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.*