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Christian Monthly

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Joyful Thanksgiving

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.

Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

Psalm 100:1-5

Give Thanks unto the Lord

*O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.
(I Chronicles 16:34)*

As the psalmist, David, offered thanks unto the Lord, so may we also find reason to thank and praise his holy name. Many times in our busy lives, we forget that it is our God from whom all blessings flow, both the natural and the spiritual blessings. If only we would pause to consider and count our blessings, our humbled hearts would overflow with thanks and praise.

How loving and patient our Heavenly Father is toward his often-unappreciative children. Even when our thanks are not readily forthcoming, He continues to bless us with great abundance. O, give thanks unto the Lord, dear fellow traveler. Let us remind one another of how good our Lord is.

As our national Thanksgiving Day draws near, we are especially reminded of the many reasons to thank our God for his wonderful blessings. Sad but true, many simply refer to this special day of thanks as Turkey Day. How thankless and ungrateful we Americans can be. May God forgive us for our ingratitude and indifference. We must remember to teach our children that it is God who brought to fruition the vision within the hearts of the pilgrims of a land in which they could worship God without repression or fear. Has this vision been lost in our day? Do we, as God's children, hold precious these blessings of God? Let us remember, *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* (James 1:17)

The Apostle Paul wrote, *Be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (Ephesians 5:18-20)

It is not only for the food we eat that we should give thanks. Consider with me the greatest and most wonderful blessing of all: salvation in Christ Jesus. God's children have reason to daily thank Him for his love and mercy. Today, by his grace, we embrace the lively hope of salvation. The reason for our hope is that, by faith, we can believe our sins forgiven in Jesus' name and atoning blood. We look beyond this fleeting life on earth to behold our redemption drawing near.

How can we be assured of these truths? *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.* (Romans 8:16-17)

O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

*Pastor Ken Storm
Tapiola, Michigan*

The Importance of The Doctrine of Christ

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 28:19)

What an enormous undertaking this would appear to be--if it were left to the power and ability of us mortals. Jesus knew better than that, as He made known in John 15:5: *Without me ye can do nothing.*

We can thank our Lord that He made this so clear to us. It is the power of his Resurrection that has enabled his disciples to believe in Him by the Holy Spirit, and to obey his command.

Before Jesus gave the mission command, He made it known that *all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. (Matthew 28:18)* Furthermore, He has given his promise that He will be with us *alway, even unto the end of the world. (Matthew 28:20)*

The end of the world has not arrived yet at this writing, so where is Jesus to be found, according to his promise? He made it known exactly where He will be: in the midst of those who are *teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:20)* It shouldn't require any reminding that the promise of Jesus' presence is where only *his* doctrine is believed and taught. The very first doctrinal point and teaching that our risen Lord Jesus gave to his disciples behind the closed doors was: *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. (John 20:23)*

The Apostle Paul was concerned, already in his time, that there were other doctrines being taught. He wrote to Timothy, *that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine. (I Timothy 1:3)* It should be a serious concern with all of God's children. If we move away from the words that Jesus has given us to teach all nations with, including ourselves, we have no promise that Jesus won't move away from us.

May our dear Heavenly Father continue to reveal unto us the wholesome, gracious, and living Word of the Gospel of his Son. It comforts, empowers, and preserves the joy of

salvation in our hearts through his Spirit, for *the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (Romans 5:5)*

The heart that has found a complete assurance in the teaching of Christ is not interested in man's imitations or dead works, but rejoices rather in the words of the Heavenly Bridegroom. As Jesus said, *The sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. (John 10:4-5) (Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?) (Matthew 7:22)* Such people use not the teachings of the Lord--only his name--and also their own works and teachings that originate from darkened human minds.

Jesus said, *My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. (John 7:16-17)*

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21)

*Pastor Carl Niemitalo
Inman, South Carolina*

Where are the Nine?

Jesus is the one who asked this question at the time He performed one of his many miracles. He had cleansed ten lepers. They had stood by the roadside when the Lord passed through Samaria and Galilee on his way to Jerusalem. But they kept their distance, as required by the Law, and cried aloud in order to be heard: *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. (Luke 17:13-14)* As they went, the miracle happened; they noticed that they were cleansed of their leprosy. When he saw that he was healed, one of the lepers praised God with a loud voice. He returned to Jesus and fell down at his feet in thanksgiving and praise. It was then that Jesus asked, *Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? (Verse 17)*

Where are all the inhabitants of the earth whom He *daily loadeth . . . with benefits? (Psalm 68:19)*

In the first world, which was destroyed by water, only eight people found safety in the ark. All the other descendants of Adam and Eve perished in the flood. When God instructed Noah to leave the ark, his very first deed was to build an altar upon which to offer a sacrifice of thanks to the Lord.

What, then, can be said of ingratitude? Is there a more insidious sin? What do we practice -- gratitude or ingratitude? In considering this question, do we at times wonder if we are numbered with the nine? It is good for us to pause and reflect upon this. Let his words, *Where are the nine?* be a daily reminder to us.

Although this is a lesson in thankfulness, it is also one in faith, as we will see when we look at this miracle more closely. Healing from leprosy was no small matter. It was a miracle of great proportion. Lepers were ostracized from society because of the contagious nature of their disease. It was even necessary for lepers to warn anyone who might unknowingly approach them lest the clean endanger themselves. The service that Jesus performed for them was worthy of greatest praise. Still, somehow, the nine failed to return and give glory to God.

Leprosy has been likened to sin. Unhealed leprosy meant certain death. Unforgiven sin means certain death.

There is no known cure for leprosy short of a divine miracle. There is no cure for the sickness of sin short of the divine miracle: that of cleansing in the blood of Christ.

What gave the ten lepers their healing? We know that it was the word of Jesus. In the case of the one who returned to give thanks, Jesus said to him, *Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole. (Luke 17:19)*

Why was the response of the nine different? Could it be that they attributed their healing to their obedience to the Law, which required them to let the priests examine them for signs of healing, and then offer the appropriate sacrifice?

Self-sufficiency is inherent in human nature. It would be much more natural for them to think that this healing came about as the result of their obedience to the Law's requirements rather than by simple faith in the words of Jesus.

If we, also, think that way, there is danger that we are numbered among the missing nine. But if we recognize that our healing has taken place entirely through the mercy and grace of Jesus, our first and primary emphasis will be a responding love that results in praise to God. We will return and give thanks to the one who has loved us and given himself for us. The secondary matters will remain in their places. The Spirit of God will remind us not to neglect them because *ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (I Corinthians 6:20)*

*Pastor Alvin Holmgren
Seattle, Washington*

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S 1789 THANKSGIVING PROCLAMATION

Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor, and

Whereas both Houses of Congress have, by their joint committee, requested me to "recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness,

Now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 26th day of November next, to be devoted by the people of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be; that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for his kind care and protection of the people of this country previous to their becoming a nation; for the signal and manifold mercies and the favorable interpositions of his providence in the course and conclusion of the late war; for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty which we have since enjoyed; for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national one now lately instituted for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge; and, in general, for all the great and various favors which He has been pleased to confer upon us.

And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions; to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually; to render our National Government a blessing to all the people by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed; to protect and guide all sovereigns and nations (especially such as have shown kindness to us), and to bless them with good governments, peace, and concord; to promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science among them and us; and, generally to grant unto all mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as He alone knows to be best.

Given under my hand, at the city of New York, the 3rd day of October, A.D. 1789.

George Washington
First President of the United States

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most high.

Psalms 91:1

The Joy of the Lord

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)

Joy. What a wonderful word. What a marvelous thing it is to be a Christian, and to be filled with the joy of the Lord. Sometimes I think we forget that joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit. One of my Turkish friends asked me once what right we have to be happy when there are so many terrible things in the world, like poverty, war, and famine?

Having joy doesn't mean ignoring the plight of others or seeing the world through rose-colored glasses. Instead, joy means letting Jesus shine through us because, as one pastor who was imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution in China wrote, "How can I not be joyful, when Jesus is living in my heart?"

What a beautiful statement—a statement that reflects Jesus' words: *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. (John 15:11)*

Why are we joyful? Because Jesus has saved us. Because we are adopted into the family of God. Because we can call the Creator of the universe our Father. Because we have a home waiting for us in glory. How can we not be joyful?

So let us rejoice then; rejoice in the joy of the Lord. Let us sing praises to God and glorify his name. Let us shout our joy to the nations so that all people know that Jesus is our Saviour. *Let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. (Psalm 5:11)*

Our God-given joy is a witness to those around us of the work of the Spirit in our lives. This doesn't mean, of course, that we refuse to see and work against the evil in the world. Perhaps one of the reasons we are given the fruit of the Spirit is to enable us to live in, and impact, a fallen world. A ready smile, a genuine laugh, an optimistic outlook, a song of praise—how can we know

how others will be affected by these simple acts of joyfulness?

I think one of the most humbling things we, as North American Christians, can do is to go on a mission trip. Then we will see reasons to live without joy. Most people you'll meet on a mission trip intimately understand Peter when he said, *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. (1 Peter 4:12-13)*

One of the amazing things about joy is that while we rejoice over our salvation here on earth, God also rejoices in Heaven. On earth, we sing praises to God, and in Heaven, God rejoices over us with singing. What an awe-inspiring thought that is. The omnipotent Creator of the universe rejoices over us. What a fantastic reason to be happy. *The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. (Zephaniah 3:17)*

I pray that God will continue to bless each one of us with his joy, and that He will use us, his children, to show his love and joy unto others.

*Leona Matson
Langley, BC, Canada*

The Garden of Life

Over the past years, I have enjoyed the outdoor beauty that God has created all around us. I spend a great amount of time in my gardens, and, in doing so, I have learned many simple but very important lessons about life. I would like to share some of what I have received, as it has brought me such pleasure, joy, and peace in my garden of life. I pray that you, too, will be blessed by this.

I often think of my flowers as my friends. They are all different, yet they each have a way of bringing joy into my life. In caring for them, I have found it interesting to compare the needs of a flower to the needs of a friend. For instance, some flowers require staking to endure the winds and rain, just as a friend may need support to get through some of life's difficult trials.

Some flowers are fragile. I look at these as our elderly who need that extra tender, loving care.

Some need fertilizer – this being that one who needs a boost in life; one who finds it so difficult to go on. Then there are those that are so fragrant; those who beckon you to come and sit with them when you need a rest. I could go on and on, but there are two things I have found very interesting that they all have in common.

First, and most importantly, they must have water (this being the Word) or they will not survive. In order to establish a rooted relationship, the Word (or Christ) must be applied. That is how we grow and form deep, lasting friendships.

The second point they have in common is the ugly, never-ending weed that so quickly surrounds them and chokes out their true beauty (this being sin). This has come to me as a lesson of forgiveness. If I am diligent in maintaining the weeds in my garden, I enjoy it so much more, and can fully appreciate the beauty of each flower. Likewise, if I can simply forgive that sinful nature again and again, how much easier it is to enjoy and find that true inner beauty in a friend.

I find great pleasure in walking through flower gardens – especially a friend's. There are times when one particular flower will stand out, and oh! -- how I would love to have even a portion of it! From time to time it works out that I am able to transplant it. It then becomes a very special flower in my garden. This pictures to me how important it is to visit and fellowship with others. When we come to know one another from the heart, we feel God's love and can even see Christ therein. We are drawn to that, and desire to have more of it for

ourselves. This creates a bigger and more beautiful garden. Love and unity among us makes us all a part of that huge family of God.

Several months ago, I lost one of the loveliest flowers in my garden. This happens in every garden at some time or other, but I, myself, had not experienced losing one of the longest-lasting and most beautiful flowers I had ever grown. What an empty spot was left there! For many months, I could only see that spot from a distance. Tears and sadness overcame me every time I would even glance in that direction.

Finally, recently, I was able to stroll down to that once very special spot. I was taken by surprise to find that there were four small clusters growing there. It was then that I realized that God had only taken a portion of that beautiful flower, and then, to my delight, I discovered that which He had left behind was blooming! How my heart rejoiced, for his goodness endures forever.

He hath made every thing beautiful in his time. (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

*Wendy Hanson
Watertown, South Dakota*

In Loving Memory

Jody Rose Myllymaki began blooming on March 17, 1959. She became a beautiful flower in many gardens of life.

On January 29, 2006, she was hand-picked and transplanted into the heavenly gardens above, where she will continue blooming in eternity.

A special thanks from Dave Myllymaki, her husband, to so many people who have taken the time to nurture and care for the little clusters, Becca, Brooke, Luke, and Brinna, their children, that God left behind for all of us to enjoy. May they, too, become beautiful flowers in your garden.

Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

John 16:22

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Jude 1:24-25

Many Shall Come in My Name

When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.

So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. (Luke 21:28-33)

At this time of the year, we see the trees losing their leaves, which is a sign that, in the not-too-distant future, winter will be upon us. Because we know that it is near, we prepare. We cover the flowerbeds and plants so that frost does not kill them. Likewise, we winterize our homes and vehicles so we are ready for whatever the season brings.

Jesus uses natural things of life and nature to prepare us for his Second Coming. In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Jesus gave the signs that will precede the Resurrection and final Judgement. His disciples asked him privately, *What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? (Matthew 24:3)*

Jesus warned them by saying, *Take heed that no man deceive you. (Verse 4)* He told them what to watch for. *For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. (Verse 5)* *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. (Verse 11)*

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (Verses 23-24)

He also spoke of natural disasters such as pestilences, famines, and earthquakes in divers places. He also said that there would be wars and rumors of wars. It is evident that all these things have happened or are taking place right now. The world is full of false religions. Most deny Jesus completely. They follow other leaders who claim to be sent from God, yet none of them have fulfilled his purpose by dying for the sins of the world. The same religions teach only good works as the basis for everlasting life. Many Christian groups, also, never mention the blood of Christ as the only means by which our sins are washed clean. We know that faith in Christ and his redemptive work on the cross and the victory of his resurrection are the only means of salvation.

Another sign that Jesus gave is that *iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. (Verse 12)* The Devil is very clever. He creates so many distractions that are alluring to the flesh of man. Many marriages

and homes are broken because love has waxed cold. The lust of the flesh turns many hearts away from their mates, and this causes their hearts to turn cold. This occurs not only in homes, but also in love toward neighbors. All of these cause our hearts to turn away from God. All of these draw man away from the first love.

All of these are signs of Christ's Second Coming. So what are we to do? We are to follow the instruction that was given to the guilty churches, and that is to repent and return to the first love. When our sin is forgiven and we are justified by faith, we have prepared ourselves for Christ Second Coming. No one knows the hour when Jesus will come but the Father in Heaven. Christ will come suddenly as a thief in the night, when man says, Peace, peace.

By keeping faith, we are ready. We are encouraged by the words of Jesus when He said, *But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. (Matthew 24:13)*

Even as the disciples prayed, *Increase our faith (Luke 17:5)*, so ought we to pray. Because we are ready, by faith in our Saviour, we can say, *Even so, come, Lord Jesus. (Revelation 22:20)*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

*Pastor Don Salo
New York Mills, Minnesota*

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

I Thessalonians 5:2-6

Children's Page

Dear Children,

In our last story, Joseph told the meanings of two dreams. He did this for two of his fellow prisoners, a baker and a butler. Both dreams came true as Joseph interpreted them. The butler's life was spared and he was given his job back.

Joseph had asked him to make mention of him to Pharaoh. But two years went by, and Joseph was still in prison. One day, he was suddenly called to see Pharaoh. What had happened to bring him this privilege?

You will find today's story in Genesis 41:1-43.

Joseph Comes Out of Prison

One night Pharaoh himself had dreams that troubled him. In the first one, he saw seven healthy cows feeding in a meadow. Then there came seven thin, unhealthy cows out of the river. They ate up the good cows. He went back to sleep and dreamed again. In this dream he saw seven very nice ears of corn on one stalk, but seven dried up ears ate them up. When he awoke, he was troubled. What could the dreams mean?

He called all of his wise men to him, and asked them to interpret his dreams. The wise men could not tell Pharaoh what they meant. Pharaoh was not pleased with these men. He needed to know the meaning, but if the wise men couldn't help him, who could?

Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day: Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker: And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret. And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.

Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. (Verses 8-13)

Pharaoh told Joseph that none could tell him the meaning of his dreams, but he had heard that Joseph could, and he asked if that was true.

Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. (Verse 16)

Pharaoh went on to tell Joseph his dreams. Joseph said that the seven healthy cows meant there were going to be seven good years of crops. But the seven sickly cows were a picture of seven years of no crops to follow. The same meaning applied to the ears of corn. The people would be very hungry then if something was not done.

Joseph advised Pharaoh to find a wise man to do the job of gathering food because he must do it in the seven good years so that there would be food through the bad years to follow.

Pharaoh liked Joseph's plan. He said to Joseph, *Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. (Verses 38-39)* I'm sure Joseph could hardly believe what he was hearing, but at the same time, he was giving all his thanks to God.

Pharaoh had more to tell Joseph that was really amazing. *Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck. (Verses 40-41)* And if that wasn't enough, Pharaoh had Joseph ride in his second chariot.

My, this story ends beautifully. Just moments before, Joseph sat in prison. Then he was given a very high position: to look over all the things that go on in Pharaoh's house and on the land. Only a few hours had gone by, and Joseph was riding through the streets, and the people were bowing to him. How full Joseph's heart must have been, and mostly in thanks to God, who had been so good to him. Joseph trusted in the Lord, and we must do the same.

So, who finally remembered Joseph, and this ended up being his release from that awful prison? It was the butler.

God makes all things beautiful in his time. Let us try to remember those who have done good things for us. Thank God for their thoughtfulness, and ask God to bless them. Go out and be kind to others, too.

*In God's peace,
Gwen Wilson*

In Memory of Rafael W. Kurtti

Our dear father, Pastor Rafael Kurtti, passed away into glory early Sunday morning, the Lord's day, on September 24, 2006 at home in Battle Ground, Washington. He was 94 years old.

Pop was given many productive years of life, and will be deeply missed by Ada, his wife of 67 years, his children, and grandchildren. He was given continued clarity of mind in his latter years, and still knew the Scriptures well. He had a pure love of the truth, concern for the souls of others, and was always ready to discuss the Word of God.

He prayed daily for his family and for whoever had a need. We are eternally grateful that our parents taught us the way of faith through Jesus Christ. At family gatherings, he was mindful to speak to us about the matters of faith. His greatest desire was that we would all be together in Heaven.

An ordained pastor, he was a servant in the ministry, serving many congregations in Oregon and Washington, answering calls to preach in distant congregations, leading Bible studies, translating Finnish ministers' sermons, and visiting the sick. He especially enjoyed fellowship with family and friends, and liked to sing hymns in English and Finnish.

He was given a pressing concern for the salvation of souls, and an urgent desire that God's order of grace, the forgiveness of sins proclaimed through the power of Jesus' name and shed blood -- the very essence of the Gospel -- be preached from our pulpits. He prayed that this Gospel message would always go forth.

May this be our prayer too, and that we will always be given thankful hearts of praise that we have received this blessed Gospel message. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:12)*

Thank you, dear friends, for your thoughts and prayers, and please continue to remember our mother, Ada, and our family in prayer.

*In love and God's peace,
Phebe (Kurtti) Johnson
Astoria, Oregon*

He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (John 7:38)

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (John 4:14)

Reasons for Thanksgiving

In our nation, we have a day set aside for Thanksgiving. On this day, we spend time reflecting on the goodness that God has given us.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians, and to us today, that we might be filled with the fullness of God. *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;*

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. (Ephesians 3:14-19)

We have much to be thankful for. Our Father in Heaven is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, which is according to the power that works in us. We have been given the gift of faith, and the knowledge of the love of Christ. We are blessed as our Father provides our daily bread. We are blessed with family, friends, and homes. Our daily needs often consume our time and thoughts, but our Heavenly Father knows our frame, and is able to perform more than we are even capable of thinking.

Paul prayed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that He would strengthen us by his Spirit, and that Christ would dwell in our hearts. It is a blessing from God that we know the love of Christ and understand how much the Father looks after our needs. His love is made known to us through his Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who suffered, died, and rose victorious on our behalf. This love is not understood by thinking. This love is understood by the inner man which is born after the Spirit. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. He is the love that unites all who believe in Him. His love knows no human boundary, for He died for the sins of the whole world.

May God grant us the spirit of thanksgiving that we can give glory to the Father for the work that He has performed in us.

*God's peace,
Rick Niska
Portland, Oregon*

Now Thank We All Our God

Now thank we all our God,
 With hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done,
 In whom his world rejoices;
Who, from our mother's arms,
 Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
 And still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
 Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
 And blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in his grace,
 And guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills
 In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
 The Father, now be given,
The Son, and Him who reigns
 With them in highest Heaven, --
The one Eternal God,
 Whom Heaven and earth adore, --
For thus it was, is now,
 And shall be evermore.

Martin Rinkart, 1586-1649

Martin Rinkart, a pastor in the walled German town of Ellenberg, witnessed the horrors of the Thirty-Years' war, with soldiers quartered in his house. In 1637, a dreadful plague broke out. Rinkart was the only clergyman in the town who was not smitten by it. He buried 4,500 persons, including his own wife, and wrote this hymn, to be sung as a grace at meals. It is Germany's national hymn, and it was sung in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, at the Thanksgiving Service at the close of the Great War.