



THANKSGIVING

Sunday, November 24, 2013 or Thursday, November 28, 2013

Guest Writer for This Unit: Adam Stokes, professor of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible and a member of the Society of Friends

The unit you are viewing, Thanksgiving, is a compact unit. This means that it is not a complete commentary of the Scripture(s) selected for this day on the calendar, nor does it have a full, supporting cultural resource unit and worship unit. Instead, to enliven the imagination of preachers and teachers, we have provided a sermonic outline, songs, suggested books, and suggested articles, links, and videos. For additional information see Thanksgiving in the archives of the Lectionary for 2008–2012.

I. Description of the Liturgical Moment

In the United States, the Thanksgiving holiday often conjures up images of Native Americans and Pilgrims feasting together. One of the earliest memories I have of school involves me making a paper turkey (which nearly thirty years later still resides at my parents' house) and being told the story of how the Native Americans aided the first European settlers by providing them with enough food to survive the rough winter. Thanksgiving, both in kindergarten and throughout the rest of my grade school experience, came to symbolize the supposed "harmony" between the indigenous peoples of America and their newly arrived neighbors.

Yet, in black American culture, this traditional view of Thanksgiving has often been viewed, justifiably, as problematic. In contrast to our Caucasian colleagues, many of whom are descended from the early Pilgrim settlers, many of our ancestors came to this country through the Middle Passage, not of their own will, but as slaves. Rather than fleeing persecution or oppression to find a land of freedom, the journey to America represented the ultimate loss of freedom for our ancestors as they were stripped of their dignity and hope (though never their faith).

Nevertheless, it is we as black Americans who perhaps have the most to be thankful for. In spite of the obstacles, we as a race have endured; we are, by the grace of God, still here. We, like the prophet David, are thankful to the God of the Bible for bringing us this far, and we are thankful for the family and community that God has placed in our midst. With this material as our backdrop, we provide a sermonic outline for Thanksgiving.

II. Thanksgiving: Sermonic Outline

A. Sermonic Focus Text(s): 1 Chronicles 29:11-13 (New Revised Standard Version)

(v. 11) Yours, O LORD, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. (v. 12) Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. (v. 13) And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.

B. Possible Titles

- i. Thankfulness in ALL Things
- ii. The God Who Gives Us Strength
- iii. Victory is the Lord's

C. Point of Exegetical Inquiry

In Hebrew, the verb rendered in most English translations as “to thank” (*yadah*) can also mean “to confess” as seen, for example, in Ezra 10:1 (NRSV: “Ezra prayed and made confession”). For the biblical authors, confession represents an expression of gratitude and thanks. For many of us, particularly those of us who are struggling through troubling times, we often find it difficult to bring ourselves to thank God for anything. Yet, in the very act of confessing to God, of acknowledging God’s presence in our life even in difficult periods, we are giving thanks to the Lord.

The phrase “riches and honor” in 1 Chronicles 29:12 has often been interpreted as referring to material wealth. This interpretation possibly originates from the Latin version of the Hebrew Bible, translated by Jerome in the 4th century, where the Hebrew term *osher* is translated as *divitiae*, which literally means material goods. However, *osher* can also mean “enrichment” not in a material sense such as in the obtainment of wealth or goods but in the sense that one’s soul and spirit are enriched through the presence of God in one’s life. Even as many of us struggle financially, we can be assured that God’s presence in our life will enrich our weakened spirits and give us the strength to face whatever challenges we may endure.

III. Introduction

For many of us, our situation is much different than David’s in the context of this passage from the Chronicler’s history. This has been a difficult year for our people. The problems with the nation’s economy have hurt us the most. We have had to endure the tragedies of Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis. Thanksgiving and giving thanks to a God who seems to permit these things to happen may be the last thing on many of our minds.

Yet we must remember that we are not alone. In the midst of the chaos of this fallen world, we serve a God whom, as David proclaims here, is mightier and more powerful than we can imagine. We serve a God who quelled the storm on the sea for His disciples and will quell the storms in our lives as well. Moreover, we have cause to be thankful that this God who is so transcendent and majestic has chosen to be immanent and present in our lives through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. We have cause to be grateful for the mercy and compassion of God.

IV. Moves/Points

Move/Point One – We serve a God of power and glory.

- a. This God showed His power in the life of David;
- b. This God showed His power through Jesus; and
- c. This God continues to show His power in our lives.

Move/Point Two – God can strengthen and exalt us.

- a. God gave strength to our ancestors;
- b. God exalted our ancestors; and
- c. God will strengthen us and exalt us in spite of adversities.

Move/Point Three – God is worthy of thanks.

- a. We should follow the example of David who gave God thanks;
- b. We should thank God with our mouths; and
- c. We should thank God through our actions towards others.

V. Celebration

In the midst of prosperity and happiness it is easy indeed to thank God for blessings. When we are going through hard times, when our experiences do not seem to correspond with what we believe we as people of God deserve, thanksgiving becomes much more difficult. But this Thanksgiving we will follow the example of David. David thanked God in the midst of a variety of circumstances: in the midst of the good, the bad, and the ugly. The David we encounter in this psalm is the David who thanked God in his time of affliction. No matter what his situation, David remembers the glory, majesty, and mercy of God. We indeed serve a mighty God who has chosen to dwell with us in our lives. For this we are so thankful. We are also thankful that we can boldly present our concerns and needs to God and then we can faithfully and patiently wait on God, because our historic and personal testimony is that God is faithful. Faithful, faithful, faithful is our God.

VI. Sounds, Sights, Colors in This Passage

Sounds: Sounds associated with the glory of God (thunder, rumbling, silence);

Sights: Glory of God filling the temple; the beauty of nature as evidence of God’s creative might and power; people giving praise and thanks to God in a temple or church; and

Colors: Luminous darkness; gold (as the color of God’s mercy seat); and brown, gold, and rust (traditional American Thanksgiving colors).

VII. Material That Preachers and Others Can Use

The following are black American prayers that can be used for this liturgical moment.

O God, I thank thee for such direct manifestation of Thy goodness, majesty and power.
—George Washington Carver

Oh God, you know I have no money, but you can make the people do for me, and you must make the people do for me. I will never give you peace till you do, God.
—Sojourner Truth

These prayers were taken from James P. Moore's *The Treasury of American Prayers* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2008).

See the Sermon Illustrations section of the African American Lectionary for illustrations that you may wish to use in presenting a sermon for this moment on the liturgical calendar.

VIII. Songs and Worship Material for Thanksgiving

A. Opening Prayer

Father, we call Thee Father because we love Thee. We are glad to be called Thy children, and to dedicate our lives to the service that extends through willing hearts and hands to the betterment of all mankind. We send a cry of Thanksgiving for people of all races, creeds, classes, and colors, the world over, and pray that through the instrumentality of our lives the spirit of peace, joy, fellowship, and brotherhood shall circle the world. We know that this world is filled with discordant notes, but help us, Father, to so unite our efforts that we may all join in one harmonious symphony for peace and brotherhood, justice, and equality of opportunity for all men. The tasks performed today with forgiveness for all our errors, we dedicate, dear Lord, to Thee. Grant us strength and courage, and faith and humility, sufficient for the tasks assigned to us.

—Mary McLeod Bethune

B. Hymn(s)

- Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven. By Henry F. Lyte. Music by John Goss
- How Great Thou Art. Words and Music by Stuart K. Hine
- Thank You, Lord. Traditional

C. Modern Song(s)

- Grateful. By Kurt Carr
- God Is Great. By Kevin Davidson

- How Can I Say Thank You. By Hezekiah Walker and Eric McDaniels

D. Congregational Song(s)

- Come, Ye Thankful People, Come. By George J. Elvey
- Let All the People Praise Him. By C. H. Morris
- We Gather Together. Netherland Folk Song. Tune by Edward Kremser
- We Give You Thanks. By Evelyn Haettenschwiller
- Count Your Blessings. By Johnson Oatman, Jr. Tune, (BLESSINGS), by Edwin O. Excell
- Now Thank We All Our God. By Martin Rinkart. Tune, (NUN DANKET), by Johann Cruger

E. Spiritual

- Ain't-a That Good News.

F. Gospel Song(s) for Choirs, Ensembles, or Praise Teams

- Every Day Is Thanksgiving. By Leonard Gregory Burks
- He Has Done Great Things for Me. By Jessy Dixon
- Jesus, You Brought Me All of the Way. By Kenneth Louis. For SATB, solo
- Just Can't Tell It All. By Smith Byron Jerome
- Thank You, Jesus. By Bernadette Blount Salley

G. Liturgical Dance Music

- Thank You. By Todd Collins, John Katina, and Sam Katina

H. Anthem(s)

- Lord, We Give Thanks to Thee. By Undine Smith Moore. For SATB a capella
- Thanks Be to Thee. By George Frederic Handel. For SATB, soprano or tenor, optional solo

- Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart. By Edward Hayes Plumptre. Arr. by Richard Dirksen. Tune, (VINEYARD HAVEN). For SATB with optional brass and tympani

I. Offertory Prayer, Song, or Instrumental

Offertory Prayer for Thanksgiving Day or Thanksgiving Eve

by Rev. Dr. LaGretta Bjorn

How can we thank you enough for all you have given us, Lord?
 We have so much, more than enough to supply all our needs.
 As we present our tithes and offerings today, make us mindful of the people, especially the children, whose earthly needs we are called to supply.
 In deepest gratitude, we offer ourselves back to you,
 for your service and your will.
 In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Song(s)

- Keeps On Making a Way. By Percy Gray
- You're a Great God. By Percy Gray
- Give Him Glory. By DeAndre Patterson

J. Prayer, Song, or Instrumental for the Period of Prayer

A Morning Prayer of Thanksgiving

by Rev. Dr. LaGretta Bjorn

Loving God, Creator of all that has been, all that is, and all that is to come;
 You made us human and gave us hearts to love you and follow you.

We thank you for the many blessings you have given us over this past year.

God, we thank you for all of the blessings you have given us throughout our lives:
 Food to eat,
 Clothes to wear,
 Shelter from the storm,
 People who love us unconditionally.

We thank you for their love because we recognize that their love for us is a reflection of your love.

We acknowledge that there are times in our lives when we, ourselves, feel unloved and

unlovable.

Give us the grace to love others, even when they are difficult.

**We trust in your faithfulness to carry us over the rough places of life.
We trust in your love to walk with us through the difficulties of our days.
We trust in your promise of life everlasting and put all of our hope in you.**

We thank you for Jesus.

We thank you that he died so that we might have eternal life.

Forgive us for our sins:

The things you asked us to do and we failed to do

As well as the things you told us not to do but we did anyway.

We are sorry and we ask that you will strengthen us

So that we will always follow you.

We pray that your Holy Spirit will be felt by people who are in pain in mind, body or spirit.

help them to know that you are with them

and you are able to carry them through their trials.

Bless our church family.

Bless our community.

Bless our nation.

Bless our world.

Enable us to live so that your will might be made manifest in the world around us.

We ask all these things in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Songs

- Bless This House. By Roy Ringwald
- Thank You, Lord. By Seth Sykes and Bessie Sykes

K. Invitational Song(s)

- Count Your Blessings. By Johnson Oatman, Jr. Tune, (BLESSINGS), by Edwin O. Excell
- Come, Now Is the Time to Worship. By Brian Doerksen
YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPWq8eM4lu8>

- My Life Is in Your Hands. By Kirk Franklin. (*This is the song that the choir would sing at my home church in Baltimore when the pastor invited persons to join the church. It is also a song that focuses on the majesty of the God incarnate in Jesus Christ who is with us in the midst of our trials.*)
YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ktoMtbG4zg>

L. Song(s) for the Benediction or Sending Forth

- Thank You. By Walter Hawkins
- May God Be with You. Based on Genesis 31:49. Tune, (MIZPAH), by Wayne Hooper
- May the Lord God Be with You. By Terry Baker and Simeon Baker
- Be With Us All, Lord. By Uzee Brown, Jr.

IX. Visual Aides and Websites for Thanksgiving

- The Legend of 5 Kernels. This is material that can be used for a Children's Thanksgiving Day sermon.
<http://childrenssermonstoday.blogspot.com/2012/11/the-legend-of-5-kernels-thanksgiving.html> (accessed 9 May 2013)
- <http://www.sermons4kids.com/thanksgiving-top-ten.htm>
- In African American communities in the late 19th century, Thanksgiving was celebrated in church with special Thanksgiving sermons.

The Rev. Benjamin Arnett was a prominent AME cleric in the Ohio AME Church. In his Centennial Thanksgiving sermon on November 30, 1876, Arnett reflects on the triumphs and failures of American history and projects a promising course for America's future:

Following the tracks of righteousness throughout the centuries and along the way of nations, we are prepared to recommend it to all and assert without a shadow of doubt, that 'Righteousness exalted a nation'; but on the other hand following the foot-prints of sin amid the ruins of Empires and remains of cities, we will say that 'sin is a reproach to any people.' But we call on all American citizens to love their country, and look not on the sins of the past, but arming ourselves for the conflict of the future, girding ourselves in the habiliments of Righteousness, march forth with the courage of a Numidian lion and with the confidence of a Roman Gladiator, and meet the demands of the age, and satisfy the duties of the hour. Let us be encouraged in our work, for we have found the moccasin track of Righteousness all along the shore of the stream of life, constantly advancing

holding humanity with a firm hand. We have seen it ‘through’ all the confusion of rising and falling States, of battle, siege and slaughter, of victory and defeat; through the varying fortunes and ultimate extinctions of Monarchies, Republics and Empires; through barbaric irruption and desolation, feudal isolation, spiritual supremacy, the heroic rush and conflict of the Cross and Crescent; amid the busy hum of industry, through the marts of trade and behind the gliding keels of commerce.

And in America, the battle-field of modern thought, we can trace the foot-prints of the one and the tracks of the other. So let us use all of our available forces, and especially our young men, and throw them into the conflict of the Right against the Wrong.

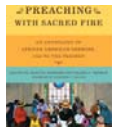
Then let the grand Centennial Thanksgiving song be heard and sung in every house of God; and in every home may thanksgiving sounds be heard, for our race has been emancipated, enfranchised and are now educating, and have the gospel preached to them!

To read all of the Rev. Arnett’s sermon in *African American Perspectives 1818–1907*, search *Arnett Centennial Thanksgiving* for the full text of the sermon.

- Afroculinaria—See this website for tips on preparing Thanksgiving meals with Africa and African Americans in mind. Online location: <http://afroculinaria.com/2011/11/22/you-asked-for-it-an-african-american-thanksgiving-primer/>
- See a 2003 article from *The Black Commentator* titled “The End of American Thanksgiving: A Cause for Universal Rejoicing” for another view concerning African Americans celebrating Thanksgiving. Online location: http://www.blackcommentator.com/66/66_cover_thanksgiving.html (accessed 5 May 2013).

X. Books to Assist in Preparing Sermons or Bible Studies Related to Thanksgiving

Preaching Resource

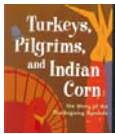


Simmons, Martha and Frank A. Thomas, eds. *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2010.

General Resources on Thanksgiving



Renee Henegar, ed. *Thanksgiving Activities*. Huntington Beach, CA: Teacher Created Materials, 2002. (For children ages 6–12)



Barth, Edna. Turkeys, Pilgrims and Indian Corn: the Story of the Thanksgiving Symbols. New York, NY: Clarion Books, 2000.

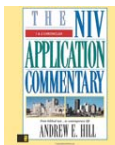


Martin, Gail Gaymer. We Give You Thanks: Three Services of Thanksgiving. Prescott, AZ: Educational Ministries, 1996.

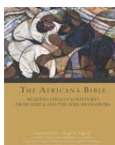
Academic/Scholarly Resources on the Concept of Thanksgiving in the Bible and on Today's Lectionary Reading (1 Chronicles)



Japhet, Sara. I & II Chronicles: A Commentary. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.



Hill, Andrew E. 1 and 2 Chronicles: From Biblical Text . . . to Contemporary Life. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.



Page, Hugh R., Jr., general editor. The Africana Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010.



Schuller, Eileen M. and Carol A. Newsom. The Hodayot (Thanksgiving Psalms): A Study Edition of 1QH^a. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012.

XI. Notes for Select Songs and Other Worship Material

A. Opening Prayer

- Prayer by Mary McLeod Bethune. The Treasury of American Prayers. James P. Moore, ed. New York, NY: Doubleday, 2008.

B. Hymn(s)

- Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven. By Henry F. Lyte. Music by John Goss
Location:
<http://www.songsandhymns.org/hymns/detail/praise-my-soul-the-king-of-heaven>

- How Great Thou Art. Words and Music by Stuart K. Hine
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2001. #148
- Thank You, Lord. Traditional
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #531

C. Modern Song(s)

- Grateful. By Kurt Carr
Location:
Carr, Kurt and The Kurt Carr Singers. No One Else. Inglewood, CA: Gospocentric, 1998.
- God Is Great. By Kevin Davidson
Location:
Davidson, Kevin and The Voices. Full Circle. Franklin, TN: New Haven Records, 2003.
- How Can I Say Thank You. By Hezekiah Walker and Eric McDaniels
Location:
Walker, Hezekiah and LFC. Live in Toronto. New York, NY: Verity, 1993.

D. Congregational Song(s)

- Come, Ye Thankful People, Come. By George J. Elvey
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #194

Lead Me, Guide Me: The African American Catholic Hymnal. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 1987. #205

The New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition. Nashville, TN: Triad Publications, 2005. #327
- Let All the People Praise Him. By C. H. Morris
Location:
Lead Me, Guide Me: The African American Catholic Hymnal. #83

The New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition. #11

Church of God in Christ. Yes, Lord! Church of God in Christ Hymnal. Memphis, TN: Church of God in Christ Pub. Board in association with the Benson Co., 1982. #14

- We Gather Together. Netherland Folk Song. Tune by Edward Kremser
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #342

Lead Me, Guide Me: The African American Catholic Hymnal. #307

The New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition. #326

Yes, Lord! Church of God in Christ Hymnal. #8

- We Give You Thanks. By Evelyn Haettenschwiller
Location:
Lead Me, Guide Me: The African American Catholic Hymnal. #140
- Count Your Blessings. By Johnson Oatman, Jr. Tune, (BLESSINGS), by Edwin O. Excell
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #533
- Now Thank We All Our God. By Martin Rinkart. Tune, (NUN DANKET), by Johann Cruger
Location:
Lead Me, Guide Me: The African American Catholic Hymnal. #208

The New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition. #330

E. Spiritual

- Ain't-a That Good News.
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #592

Yes, Lord! Church of God in Christ Hymnal. #171

F. Gospel Song(s) for Choirs, Ensembles, or Praise Teams

- Every Day Is Thanksgiving. By Leonard Gregory Burks
Location:
Cleveland, James. Gospel Music Workshop of America. New York, NY: Savoy, 1990.

- He Has Done Great Things for Me. By Jessy Dixon
Location:
Abbington, James. 49 More Hidden Treasures from the African American Heritage Hymnal. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2007.
- Jesus, You Brought Me All of the Way. By Kenneth Louis. For SATB, solo
Location:
GIA Publications, Inc.
7404 South Mason Avenue
Chicago, IL 60638
Phone: 1-800-GIA-1358

Online location: www.giamusic.com

Online audio sample available: www.giamusic.com/mp3s/6131.mp3

Sheet Music available: <http://www.giamusic.com/searchPDFS/G6131.pdf>
- Just Can't Tell It All. By Smith Byron Jerome
Location:
McConnell, Terri. He Worked It Out. Middleburg, FL: Emtro Gospel, 2006.
- Thank You, Jesus. By Bernadette Blount Salley
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #534

G. Liturgical Dance Music

- Thank You. By Todd Collins, John Katina, and Sam Katina
Location:
The Katinas. The Katinas: Collection. Nashville, TN: Gotee Records, 2006.

H. Anthem(s)

- Lord, We Give Thanks to Thee. By Undine Smith Moore. For SATB *a capella*
Location:
Sheet Music and Sample Available
GIA Publications, Inc.
Phone: 1-800-GIA-1358
Online location: www.giamusic.com
- Thanks Be to Thee. By George Frederic Handel. For SATB, soprano or tenor, optional solo
Location:
GIA Publications, Inc.

Phone: 1-800-GIA-1358
Online location: www.giamusic.com

- Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart. By Edward Hayes Plumptre. Arr. by Richard Dirksen. Tune, (VINEYARD HAVEN). For SATB with optional brass and tympani
Location:
Shawnee Press, Inc.
1107 17th Avenue South
Nashville, TN 37212
Phone: 1-800-962-8584

Online location: www.shawneepress.com

I. Offertory Prayer, Song, or Instrumental

Prayer

- **Offertory Prayer for Thanksgiving Day or Thanksgiving Eve.** By Rev. Dr. LaGretta Bjorn, Pastor of the United Methodist Church of Spring Valley in Spring Valley, NY.

Song(s)

- Keeps On Making a Way. By Percy Gray
Location:
The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir. This Is Your House. Brentwood, TN: Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, 2003.
- You're a Great God. By Percy Gray
Location:
Reed's Temple Mass Choir. Keeps On Making a Way. Franklin, TN: New Haven Records, 2002.
- Give Him Glory. By DeAndre Patterson
Location:
DeAndre Patterson. Indianapolis, IN: Tyscot Records, 2004.

J. Prayer, Song, or Instrumental for the Period of Prayer

Prayer

- The prayer for the morning was provided by Reverend Dr. LaGretta Bajorn, Pastor of the United Methodist Church of Spring Valley in Spring Valley, NY.

Song(s)

- Bless This House. By Roy Ringwald
Location:
Shawnee Press, Inc.
Phone: 1-800-962-8584
Online location: www.sheetmusicplus.com
- Thank You, Lord. By Seth Sykes and Bessie Sykes
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #536

K. Invitational Song(s)

- Count Your Blessings. By Johnson Oatman, Jr. Tune, (BLESSINGS), by Edwin O. Excell
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #533

The New National Baptist Hymnal 21st Century Edition. #325
- Come, Now Is the Time to Worship. By Brian Doerksen
Location:
Brian Doerksen. It's Time. New York, NY: Integrity, 2008.
- My Life Is in Your Hands. By Kirk Franklin
Location:
God's Property from Kirk Franklin's Nu Nation. New York, NY: Sony Legacy, 1997.

L. Song(s) for the Benediction or Sending Forth

- Thank You. By Walter Hawkins
Location:
Love Alive 4. Jackson, MS: Malaco Records, 1990.
- May God Be with You. Based on Genesis 31:49. Tune, (MIZPAH), by Wayne Hooper
Location:
The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985. #673
- May the Lord God Be with You. By Terry Baker and Simeon Baker
Location:
Pace, Joseph. Worship for the Kingdom. New York, NY: EMI Gospel/Alliant, 2007.

- Be With Us All, Lord. By Uzee Brown, Jr.
Location:
African American Heritage Hymnal. #641