

“THE BELL”



BANGOR LIBERTY
FRIENDS
NEWSLETTER

November 2019

Well, Thanksgiving is just about here. Most likely your plans are already set. Maybe you're cleaning your house in anticipation of friends and family who will invade soon. Maybe you're making shopping lists to accommodate all of the hungry mouths you'll need to satisfy. Or if you are lucky all you have to do is lay claim to the most comfortable place from which to watch tv and slip gently into that food coma that you know is coming. Whether you have a crowd coming to your home or you are going to someone else's we all have our plans to the Thanksgiving celebration that's coming.

Here, though, is a question that few of us consider: In all your plans for the big day, where is God? In the rush of preparations and planning of meals for a day that is set aside for celebrating our thankfulness, how much consideration do we give for the One to whom our thanks, for our very breath, belong?

Think about it, nothing puts a smile on Satan's face quicker than the manner in which we celebrate Thanksgiving. We give a quick word of thanks to a seemingly mysterious, unknown god, followed by a festival of gluttony, mindless entertainment, and self-indulgence.

It's all kind of depressing when you consider that Thanksgiving Day, like Christmas and Easter, is one of those days when even non-believers at least pay lip service to the existence of God. Millions of people will go through the motions of offering thanks to their deity of choice, some will even mean it. It is for that reason that we cannot waste the opportunity to share God's grace and goodness with friends and family who may be open to hearing it.

Don't mistake this for a call to legalism, or forced piety, to shun all the familiar things of Thanksgiving. There is nothing inherently wicked about turkey or football, likewise, there is nothing inherently godly about disconnecting the satellite dish for the weekend and eating gruel.

Let's avoid the extremes and work to find some balance. Despite what you may hear on the food network, there is no eternal merit in a perfectly cooked turkey, nor a heavenly reward for watching

every last, available minute of football, or Netflix binge marathon. Like everything there is a way to enjoy ourselves, even indulge ourselves and at the same time stand apart as believers from the crowd.

The writer of the book of Hebrews exhorts us to "continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name." (Hebrews 13:15) In Colossians Paul writes, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." (Colossians 3:17) Thanksgiving is a perpetual attitude that we are called to display as we praise and thank God for His blessing and work in our lives.

If we're honest, most of us fail to display this pattern on a consistent basis. We tend to focus our thanks on the "big" things in life, the monumental blessing and long awaited answers to prayers. We often forget how every day of our existence depends on God's sustaining grace.

So, here are a few thoughts to consider that hopefully will help to shape your thinking not just for this week but for every day we enjoy.

In Psalm 97, verse 12 it reads, "Be glad in the Lord, you righteous ones, and give thanks to His holy name." It's not just a matter of thanking God for what He does, but just as importantly who He is. Set aside some time to dwell on God's attributes, thank Him for His character.

Consider that because of God, you and I have a standard that we can depend on for all matters of life. From the truth presented in scripture we can understand the ups and downs of life better than any educator, philosopher, politician or social critic. Because of His revealed Word we know how to be good employees, how to love our spouses, how to raise faithful families and how to truly love our neighbor. It is the blessings of knowing and growing in our knowledge of scripture that we should give thanks.

Paul told the church in Corinth, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57) Jesus Christ not only rescued us from the power and penalty of our sins, he also elevated us to a position of blessing. He saved us from punishment and brings

glory to our lives. He takes away the threat of an unending hell and replaces it with an eternal hope in Heaven. Through Him we have assurance of our salvation. You and I, as believers, can rest in the confidence of Christ's guarantee of our salvation, which is another cause for thanksgiving.

reinforcing our weak spots, comforting us and drawing us into a greater dependence and freedom in our relationship with Him.

That leads into another area that we don't do very well. We can see those moments when God is working in our lives but we don't always acknowledge it in the lives of others. An old adage states that one Christian is no Christian (unus Christianus, nullus Christianus). An isolated, solitary Christian is not practicing the Christian faith as it was intended. Christ called his disciples to be a community. To be a gather, ekklesia, that lived their lives together. Are we doing that? Are we thankful for the brothers and sisters in Christ who make up our community? Rarely do Christians live in total spiritual isolation. God has surrounded most of us with brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. He's forged those relationships for our growth, encouragement, accountability, and spiritual sharpening ([Proverbs 27:17](#)), and we ought to be thankful for it.

In closing, the holiday we call Thanksgiving presents us with an obvious opportunity to proclaim God's grace and faithfulness through our thankfulness. How we choose to celebrate should be driven by how we can best magnify God's goodness and demonstrate His Gospel to the world.

Library

Christmas time is here. Everyone is busier than ever. Stop. Relax. For just a few minutes each day and thank the Lord for all you have. While you relax, read a book from our library. We have many books about Christmas, both fiction and nonfiction.

Reminder: Do not leave things in the refrigerator or freezer. Take things home or give them away.

Mystery Friend

Our Mystery Friend for November was born on an island. He/She attended school in a very small Iowa town—home of the Wildcats. Our Mystery Friend has two brothers, one wife, and two children. His/Her job includes talking. A favorite food is grilled peaches. Most people would not know that our Mystery Friend has walked the whole length of the Panama Canal. He/She has spent a whole month in Djibouti. They commented that they especially like the food at Bangor Liberty and people really do care about each other.

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The answer will be in next month's Bell.

Mystery Friend for October was Savannah Peters.

Bangor Liberty Church Cookbooks

When doing your Christmas shopping remember Bangor Liberty Church Cookbooks for \$10.00. These are available in the church office and could be used for a grab bag or someone who doesn't have one yet

Iowa Friend

If you are interested in receiving the Iowa Friend Newsletter let Shirley know.

Fruitful Kingdom Ministry, Part 1

Our Iowa Yearly Meeting Christian Social concerns committee is currently looking at the definition of peace. A definition of peace is God. He is our source of peace. Through God we find peace within ourselves and then experience peace with others. We, as Christians need to have the right relationship with God. We need to show others how to share their faith and develop relationships with others that don't live or think like us. We need to look at conflict as an opportunity to glorify God, serve others and grow to be like Christ.

WE NEED TO GET UNCOMFORTABLE! God uses us to dissipate anger, improve understanding, promote justice and encourage repentance and reconciliation. We as Christians are the Lord's peacemakers. We must use our influence to

impact our culture if we want to see God's will done in our world. What can a church family do?

First we must examine our own relationship with God. Do we have any prejudices? Are our beliefs biblically based? Do we offer grace? Are we addressing the conflicts in our lives in the ways that would please and honor God? Do we know what the peacemaking responses are to conflict? Are we using our gifts to serve God and His church? Are we bringing His love, mercy, forgiveness, strength and wisdom to the conflicts in our daily lives and with our church family?

Second, are we developing a relationship with someone in our community that doesn't think or live like you? Invite them to church and/or to activities. If you are uncomfortable with that, you could start by developing a deeper relationship with someone in our church family that you currently don't visit with regularly. After you get your feet wet, then you could go out into the community when you feel more comfortable. Ask for help from our leadership if needed.

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Cor. 10:31

- Bangor Liberty Christian Social
Concerns Committee