



Thanksgiving, 2016

Dear Members and Friends of First Baptist Church,

November is here, the leaves have changed and fallen, and Thanksgiving is upon us once again. Hopefully, we're reminded of the first Pilgrims who made their way to Plymouth Rock in 1621 to escape religious persecution in England. Even though nearly half of the 102 original Pilgrims did not survive, the 53 remaining survivors who had made the long voyage celebrated God's good providence about eleven months later in a harvest feast which later became known as Thanksgiving. What is Thanksgiving? It's a willing response to what God has given us out of good nature and good pleasure.

**Remembering God's Grace to All.** When God created us, He created us in His own image and with the unique ability to reason and relate to Him. He has given us good things, food and taste buds, relationships and pleasure, beauty and art, music and architecture, science and the ability to engineer great things. He has given us sight to behold the wonders of a rainbow or a magnificent mountain range. Most of us still have a sense of smell to enjoy the fresh baked foods and we have ears to hear the beauty of birds singing and waves crashing into the shore. Moreover, God has given us all of these with the ability to *appreciate* them as something special. In other words, we are far above all living things in the created natural order. In fact, the Bible teaches us that we were created only a little lower than the angels (Heb. 2:7). Every member of humanity, regardless of their faith or non-faith, gets to enjoy and be thankful for God's common grace to all.

**Remembering God's Grace to His Redeemed.** Many of us have trials, but no believer in Jesus has it as bad as he or she deserves. No matter how much affliction of soul, mind and body disturb our peace, we still have a God who doesn't give us what we deserve, but He loves us, forgives us, strengthens us and encourages us freely. When the Son of God lovingly laid down all his rights and died on the cross, He died as if He were a criminal, even though He is wholly harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners (Heb. 7:26). The Lamb of God is the innocent One who died to take away the sins of the world.

Today, we give thanks to God because we're the ones who deserve far worse for our rebellion against a great and holy God, yet coming in faith and repentance to the cross, we've been given mercy through Jesus and His finished work on the cross. We have been redeemed. Let us rehearse and preach these truths to ourselves daily this Thanksgiving season and be reminded of how blessed we truly are. And let us view ourselves and one another who believe in Jesus through this lens of grace and be thankful for the redeemed community of likeminded believers of which God has made us participants and members. May God give each of you a blessed Thanksgiving!

Thankful for His goodness,

David M. Chenoweth, Pastor

DMC/fc

