

Proclamation Establishing Thanksgiving Day

October 3, 1863

The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union. Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle, or the ship; the axe had enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is

permitted to expect continuance of years, with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. 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 voice by the whole American people. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, 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. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to his tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity and Union.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.
Done at the city of Washington, this third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and

sixty-three, and of the independence of the United States the eighty-eighth.

A. Lincoln

³⁶ "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;

³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

⁴⁰ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴² "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.

⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. (Mat 24:36-44 NIV)

Introduction: Brief History of Thanksgiving... Read one or both proclamations (Obama and Lincoln?) So, what do we have to be thankful for this year?

Move 1: I want to show that we are no different than our ancestors when it comes to worry...

Given the fact that the phrase "Do not fear" appears in the Bible 365 times, it would seem that both the Old Testament

and the New Testament are giving us the same important message—don't worry, God is in control. And indeed, they are giving us that message. But some days it is hard to remember that we have no need to worry. When the bills come in faster than the paychecks—when the gas in the car burns up faster than our budgets generate cash to refill the tank, when we hear on the news about shootings, and terrorists and car accidents—when we hear about another new tax that is being added to our already depleted net income—when everyday we hear about people doing without and wonder when we will join them in the bread line or at the soup kitchen—when we hear about another friend dying of cancer or some other illness, it is hard not to worry. Are these days any worse than the days when these scriptures were written? In some ways, they are, but those people thousands of years ago had troubles just as we do today...so God must be considering all the ways that things can go wrong for us and telling us to hang in there—everything is going to be all right.

Move 2: I want to show that despite everything that can happen to us, we should still be thankful to God for what He has done for us.

So I say to you today as God says in the scriptures, hang in there—everything is going to be all right. How do I know that? Because I know as Abraham Lincoln did that God has everything under control. God is guiding this country toward its destiny. And I know that what God is doing is not just for this church, this community or even for this country, what God is doing is for the all humanity. Even though there are millions of people in the world today who do not believe in Jesus Christ, God is working out salvation for them too. It's not like Tinkerbell, the fairy in the story of Peter Pan, where in order

for her to be saved you have to believe in her, Jesus Christ has power and strength whether the whole world believes in him or not. And someday the whole world will believe in him as it says in Philippians 2:9-10. ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (Phi 2:9-10 NIV)

Move 3: I want the congregation to know that we should always give thanks to God and try not to worry.

God loves us. That's why we love him. God has given his son as a sacrifice for our sins so that we can have a relationship with him. And he has set his Son over us as our Judge and our High Priest so that we can go to him with any problem and he will listen. Jesus Christ was fully human so he has experienced all the temptations we face, he knows sorrow, grief, hunger, and death. He knows death better than any of us because he has experienced it. So we can be assured that when we face the worst that this life can offer, God is ready to bring us into his family and offer us salvation through the blood of his son Jesus. All we need to do is put things in the right perspective. If we put God first in our lives, everything else will fall into place. That is the message of hope that we can thank God for every day. The world may pass away but God's love will last forever. So, you don't have to wait until the fourth Thursday of November to give thanks to God.... You can do it today and everyday—because God is control. Hang in there—everything is going to be all right!