

Thanks-Living

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Witness to Our Thankfulness

In an essay called “The Art of Living,” Wilfred Peterson has written:

The art of thanksgiving is thanks-living. It is gratitude in action. . . .

It is thanking God for the gift of life by living it triumphantly. . . .

It is thanking God for opportunities by accepting them as a challenge to achievement. . . .

It is thanking God for inspiration by living to be an inspiration to others. . . .

It is adding to your prayers of thanksgiving, acts of thanks-living. [The Art of Living (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), pp. 44–45]

President David O. McKay counseled Church members:

Thankfulness is the beginning of gratitude. Gratitude is the completion of thankfulness. Thankfulness may consist merely of words. Gratitude is shown in acts. [Pathways to Happiness (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1957), p. 317]

Some of the beautiful words of Psalm 100 stress: “Know ye that the Lord he is God: . . . be thankful unto him, and bless his name.”

And again, the Lord, through his great prophet King Benjamin, has taught us there is more than just thoughts and prayers to proper thanksgiving. I quote:

I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess, to that God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice. . . .

. . . if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants.

. . . all that he requires of you is to keep his commandments; . . . if ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you. [Mosiah 2:20–22]

If we are truly thankful, our acts will be witness to our thankfulness.

Showing Our Thankfulness

Thanksgiving Day has always been designed to be a religious experience, a day to know the Lord and bless his name.

Dee F. Andersen was administrative vice president at Brigham Young University when this devotional address was given on 26 November 1985.

Three hundred sixty-four years ago, Governor William Bradford declared a three-day fast, and a small group of pilgrims gathered to “worship and give thanks to God.” Two years later, in 1623, on July 30, the first official Thanksgiving Day was set up for “the special purpose of prayer.” During the revolutionary war there were some eight special days of thanks, which were observed for “special blessings that had been received.” On November 26, 1789, more than 100 years after the first special day of prayer, President George Washington issued a special proclamation for a day of “giving thanks.” And about 100 years later in 1863 President Abraham Lincoln designated the last Thursday in November as “a day of thanksgiving and praise to our benevolent Father.” Now, after more than three and a half centuries, we still celebrate a “Thanksgiving Day.”

But in our hearts, is there sufficient thankfulness to really give praise to our benevolent Father? Does this thankfulness result in showing any true gratitude? Do we do any more than say a thanksgiving prayer over the traditional Thanksgiving feast? Or are some of our prayers and our lives like those described by the poet Robert Burns— “Three mile prayers and one-half mile graces”? Have we learned to say thank you and to show thank you?

I like these words—they seem to suggest action:

*If you hear a kind word spoken
Of some worthy soul you know,
It may fill his heart with sunshine
If you'd only tell him so.*

*If a deed, however humble, helps you
On your way to go,
Seek the one whose hand has helped you.
Seek him out and tell him so.*

*If your heart is touched and tender
Toward a sinner lost and low,
It might help him to do better*

If you would only tell him so.

[Anonymous]

President Gordon B. Hinckley has taught us:

Absence of gratitude is the mark of the narrow, uneducated mind. It bespeaks a lack of knowledge and the ignorance of self-sufficiency. [CR, Oct. 1964, p. 117]

Thankfulness may indeed be measured by the number of words we use. Gratitude, however, must be measured by the nature of our actions.

And Richard L. Evans said: “Gratitude has not even been born until it has actually been converted into word and deed.”

Each of us should look for ways of saying thank you to each other, and we should show our thankfulness to the Lord by keeping his commandments.

Saying Thank You

In the past I have not always been able to say or show my thanks as I have really wanted to. Some years ago, almost every morning I found myself arriving in the parking lot of a certain institution at the same time as another individual. It was early in the morning, usually very dark and very quiet. Most of the time we were alone as we walked from our vehicles into the building. This individual was one of the finest persons I have ever known. I looked up to him. I admired him, I loved him. Yet I had never told him so. Each time we entered the building and climbed onto the elevator together, I found myself tongue-tied. I could hardly stammer “Good morning,” much less, “Oh, how I admire you” or “Thank you for all you have done and are doing for me.” After one of these mornings, I arrived in my office, disgusted with my inability to express my appreciation. In desperation, with a great desire to just say thank you, I took a pen in hand, and in longhand wrote a short note that expressed my feelings. Hurriedly I addressed

an envelope and quickly mailed the note before my courage failed me. A *very* few days later I received a very sweet, short, three-sentence note. I could tell he had personally typed it out on the old typewriter he kept by his desk. It read:

Dear Dee,

That was one of the sweetest notes I have ever received, and I appreciate hearing from you. I am indeed grateful to be so close to you, and I hope that we may see each other once in a while. May the Lord bless you and assist you in all your efforts. With kindest wishes.
Faithfully yours,

While I had known this individual and worked closely with him for a long time, this was really the beginning of a choice and wonderful friendship with this special person—President Spencer W. Kimball. Oh, how President Kimball blessed my life because I took the time and had the courage to say thank you.

Think how the Lord then desires to bless each of us as we *show our thankfulness* by keeping the commandments. For he tells us that as we “abide the law,” we will receive the blessing (D&C 132:5).

How long has it been since any of us has really expressed a sincere and specific thank you to someone near or dear to us? To our parents? To a faculty member? To a student? To a roommate? Or to the Lord?

“Thanks for the Memories”

My grandson taught me a lesson about saying thanks. Jared, who is now eight years old, lives in Hong Kong. As he has grown up, he has heard his father and me talk about our fishing trips. He has even accompanied us a time or two on short trips. But, because of his age, he had never caught a fish. Two years ago as his parents prepared for home leave, they noticed that Jared prayed each evening that he

could go fishing, and he continued so to pray. When the family arrived in the United States, we arranged a fishing experience. We visited Jackson Hole and found a place on the Snake River where Jared could indeed catch some fish. And he did. He caught several. I’ll admit that he wasn’t very interested in baiting his hook or taking the fish off the hook when they were caught. Nevertheless, he seemed to enjoy the experience. I was interested in the report Jared would make to his Father in Heaven that night. It was very short. It expressed true thankfulness. It was only four words long. He said, “Thanks for the memories.”

Each of us has been given very special experiences and memories. Wouldn’t it be nice if we could all say “Thanks for the memories?”

The Way We Live

Alice Cary, in her poem “Nobility,” states:

*True worth is in being, not seeming,—
In doing, each day that goes by,
Some little good—not in dreaming
Of great things to do by and by.
For whatever men say in their blindness,
And spite of the fancies of youth,
There’s nothing so kingly as kindness,
And nothing so royal as truth.*

*We get back our mete as we measure—
We cannot do wrong and feel right,
Nor can we give pain and gain pleasure,
For justice avenges each slight.*

*We cannot make bargains for blisses,
Nor catch them like fishes in nets;
And sometimes the thing our life misses
Helps more than the thing which it gets.
For good lieth not in pursuing,
Nor gaining of great nor of small,
But just in the doing, and doing
As we would be done by, is all.*

In our “doing and doing,” each of us can say thank you to those around us by simply living that golden rule.

I would like to conclude these remarks by stressing three sentences from the mission statement of this great university:

All students at BYU should be taught the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Any education is inadequate which does not emphasize that His is the only name given under heaven whereby mankind can be saved. Certainly all relationships within the BYU community should reflect devout love of God and a loving, genuine concern for the welfare of our neighbor.

If we do have this loving, genuine concern for others, Brigham Young University will be like no other place on earth, and so it should be.

Remember, as important as saying thank you is, it is more important to show our thankfulness in the way we live. We need to give others some reason to say thank you to us. May we show our thanksgiving this year by our thanks-living. For the Lord God has said:

And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundredfold, yea, more. [D&C 78:19]

May we be so blessed, I pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.