

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" These words from the 46th Psalm affirm the wonderful God who made us and sustains us. This Psalm presents the might and power of the Lord: "He uttered his voice, the earth melted" It also speaks of the desolation he has made in the earth by describing the noise that is caused by cutting the weapons of war into pieces. Then follow the breathtaking words: "Be still and know that I am God, I will be praised among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth". Sooner or later the blessed person learns that if God is to play an important role in life, he must pause to listen in quietness. Today, on Thanksgiving Sunday, we are here for praise and thanksgiving. In spite of the turmoil of the world and the worries we have experienced, we are here counting our blessings. If we compare our lives with those who celebrated the first thanksgiving on our shores, we see how blest we are. The poorest among us is fabulously rich compared to those who sang songs of praise on our shores 2 cen. ago. As the river Nile flows in Egypt some 1300 miles in singular grandeur without one tributary dispersing bounty and fertility, so our God has blessed us. We can shout and sing "O give thanks unto the Lord for his mercy endures forever".

The 136th Psalm from which that verse comes is unique in that in each of its 36 verses the one clause "for his mercy endures

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forever" is repeated. 36 times, his mercy endures forever. Just as the Psalmist heart was bursting with gratitude so immense he could not contain it, so we can say "O give thanks to the ~~God~~ God of gods, the Lord of lords" as we think about thankfulness.

Recently I read about a man who, because of the nature of his employment, experienced periods of no work when the weather was bad. He fretted about his children who had worn out shoes. One had been using his foot as a brake for a coaster wagon, and another had skipped rope too much. In the midst the wading machine broke down. And while an ad for a used washer he came to a large mansion. Before entering, his resentment boiled over. Some people had the all the comforts and more, while others, including himself, had to struggle just for the necessities. Upon entering the kitchen with all its modern conveniences, he thought to himself, "How happy my wife would be to have a kitchen like this". His thankfulness was great, however, when the woman asked a very reasonable price for the washer. As he made the transaction he could not help but remark about his children's shoes and then saying: "It must be wonderful to have everything. You must be very happy".

Thereupon the woman ran from the room, sobbing. Perplexed he asked if he had said anything wrong. To which the owner of the mansion said "We have only one child, a little girl. She has never walked a step in her life. A pair of worn out shoes

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would make us very happy.

The man went home, fell on his knees and thanked God for two worn out pairs of jeans. From then on he began thanking God for his blessings rather than magnifying the inequities of life.

One of the most important things for which the Psalmist was thanking God for was the rich heritage God had bestowed upon Israel. His people were free, no longer did Egyptians whips lash them. They were no longer slaves. They were in their own land worshipping God with dignity.

We can thank God for a rich heritage, too. We can thank him for the right to worship, the rich to hear the message of God's saving grace in Jesus Christ. We often take the goodness and mercy of God for granted. Every seat in every church ought to be filled. Every heart ought to be filled with overflowing when we remember the goodness of God to our people.

Many years ago, King Alfonso of Aragon was known for his unselfish Christian life. Unfortunately, the people of his court did not share his sense of gratitude toward the Lord and his officers refused to say grace whenever they ate. Since the food was already there they did not need to pray for it, and that it was not necessary to thank God for the food the King had already given them. To teach them a lesson, the King arranged an elaborate banquet at which grace was omitted. After all were seated, a shabbily dressed tramp strode into the

dining room, and without a word to the king or anyone else, with no apology for his appearance, he sat down at the royal table and devoured course after course. When he finished, he left the room without a word. Such an act aroused the guests to a turmoil of protest. Then Alfonsa arose and said: "You are very angry about this poor fellow because of his discourteous, and ungrateful behavior. But, what he has done only once, you do three times a day. In God's sight you must be less worthy than the beggar appears to me. For when you go to the table you never give a word of recognition to your King, the heavenly Father, and when you are filled you go your way without a word of thanks to the giver of all that is good.

We, too, in this rich land, ought to be reminded of him who is the source of all that is good. Our forefathers gathered for two reasons...to feast, and to give thanks. We usually do the first...often forget the second.. God has taken us by the hand and given us much.

There is an ancient story that 2 angels flew to earth. Each carried a basket, and wherever anyone prayed, the angels stopped and went in. Soon the basket carried by one of the angels was full and heavy; but the other basket remained almost empty. Into the first basket were put prayers of petition. Please give me this...I want that; into the other went "thank you" prayers.

Let us suggest one more thing. Thanksgiving only becomes

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real when it makes us conscious of the need of others.

A gradeschool student wrote Sen. Hatfield: "I was reading the "Weekly Reader and I saw a boy on front, You can see his bones. Would you buy the cattle from the farmers and it to the poor".....Another child wrote "The little boy was eating a piece of bean and they should put more in their mouth, don;t you think? I do. They are starving to death. If we was them they would send us food,. Why don't you do something?"..... and another wrote "I know of the money and tax, but does money matter more than lives? I hope not".

Does money matter more than lives. A spirit of thanksgiving would mke us conscious of our responsibilities to others.

Many of you remember Graham Kerr, the wine-toting charismatic 'king of the kitchen', a familiar face on TV a generation ago.

The drive of Kerr and his wife, Treena, who produced the show, parlayed the "Galloping Gourmet" TV series, and best-selling cookbooks, into a multimillion \$ business with all the trimmings - a mansion on Chesepeake Bay, a yacht, and \$52000 kitchen. Kerr was considered the highest paid cook in history.

A Christian conversion in 1975 shifted Kerr's focus from gourmet cooking to the problems of world hunger. Today the Kerrs live in an Oregon religious missionary complex, where they have built an energy efficient home. Some of their fortune they gave away, saving only enough for an annual income of

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\$12,500.

Why the life-style change. Well, the Kerrs are open about their lives. Altho seemingly 'on top of the world', they had problems - with marriage, children, finances. A near fatal auto accident in 1972 ended the TV series. Treena became a drug addict. Just as she was about to be admitted to long term hospitalization she went to a little church where Jesus stepped into her life.

She didn't tell her husband about the conversion - he first learned of it from a siper-market checker. But as he watched her become free of drugs and fear, as he watched her light up the lives of their family with love. Graham Kerr, too, asked Christ to come into his life.

The kerrs sold their Maryland estate, and purchased 600 acres in the Ricky Mountains of Colo fora retreat for married couples. Ultimately, tho, they settled in Oregon - in Salem - where they live the simple life emphasising energy and food conservation.

Thru 'Youth With a Mission, for which he has worked for a number of years unsalried, Kerr eveloped 'Project LORD (Long Range Development for the World). It involves buying parcels of land in third world countries. a piece of land is turned over to a couple to farm, with the expectation that the farm will provide food for the family and a surplus for market as well. After a few years the family buys the property for a

small sum. Efforts are being concentrated in Latin America at the present time, but it is hoped that this idea for feeding the world's hungry will be taken up and used elsewhere by other organizations. Kerr travels around the world promoting Operation LORD, which is supported by people who send "\$5 here and \$2 there".

You and I need a mission this Thanksgiving. We need to count our blessings. We need to focus our attention on the One who is source of all we have. And we who have been bountifully blessed, let us be a blessing to others.