

THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

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THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

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Thanksgiving Day

Thanksgiving Day of November 26, 1970, just as was the day of November 24, 1621, set aside by the New England Colonists, is a day to give thanks. It was suggested no doubt by the English Harvest Home and old fashion festivals held to celebrate the gathering of crops or the completion of the harvest season.

The first American Thanksgiving was observed by the Plymouth Colony, November 24, 1621. This was in celebration of the fine harvest the colony had reaped that year. So along with the Indians, the group prepared a great feast and gave thanks to God. This act became a tradition with the people and spread throughout New England. After the Revolutionary War, it spread to the middle states down over the west, as the people themselves spread. Up to the Civil War, the idea of Thanksgiving Day spread slowly throughout the south, the people here being more bound in English customs.

To foster the celebration, the governors of most states issued Thanksgiving proclamations, and Abraham Lincoln set the precedent for the President to do the same for the nation in 1863, using by common consent, the last Thursday in November.

Though the actual namesake day is native only to the United States, mention of the same sort of celebration is made in the Bible and Biblical times when the Pilgrims were rendering celebration for Thanksgiving season in the temple. As they joined in the processional, they played sacred anthems on all types of instruments. The Thanksgiving religious instruments used in the festival are depicted in the 150th Psalm.

In the first American celebration in 1621, there was not the jubilation of the ancient times, but quiet thankfulness that lives had been spared, food was bountiful, friendships flourishing, and freedom at last acquired. It was here perhaps the idea of preparing bounteous supplies of food and inviting friends to partake of the feast originated.

Necessity made hunting an activity of the people of that time and the same goes for friendliness and cooperation. Through the years in America, the people, many of them strayed from the real reason behind the holiday in favor of the more glamorous rituals of modern existence such as football games, parades, ecetra, and the over-indulgence of the body in favor of the intaking of food and drink, so that this day originally set aside for Thanksgiving to God is begun and ended without a single thought of God, even to the extent often that the day following, the person is anything but thankful. The winter scope of activities makes for this lack of time to be allotted to religious activities also. Originally the day was spent in worship and thanksgiving. Now, however, such remarks as "I can't go to the services today; gotta do all this cooking;" It's the same time as the big TV program; "I wanna see the parade, movie or game." ecetra; "Be gone all day hunting," are heard, and the modern 30 or 45 minutes of religious service is forsaken.

This Thanksgiving Day of 1970 is a day in which many of us have much to be thankful. At the same time, many of us are sad because of our sons who are behind the line of guns, fighting our enemies in Viet Nam. We should not forget the long, bitter wars and strife that some member of every family suffered during Thanksgiv-

THIS WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

GROWING THROUGH STRUGGLE

Beginning Where You Are

Many groups today are criticizing some of the practices and institutions of our society. Their reasons are varied; some may be justified while others are not. In this situation Christians need to ask themselves, How should I, as a Christian, relate to my community and my nation?

A newspaper columnist, Sydney J. Harris, has commented on current methods of trying to bring about needed change:

"It's strange that so many people are concerned about 'militance' who aren't at all concerned about the conditions that give rise to militance. Let me start with an example of the most elementary kind.

"From time to time, we see pictures in the paper of a group of mothers barricading a city street while their children are crossing on their way home from school.

"In most cases, these mothers have protested for a year or more that the city should install a traffic light at a dangerous intersection. They write letters, visit the mayor, petition the city council — and nothing is done.

"So they decide that direct action must be taken, and they mount the barricades, blocking all traffic during school-travel periods and promising to continue until their children's safety has been assured.

"What happens in almost every case? The next morning, or shortly afterwards, a traffic signal miraculously is installed at the corner. The authorities have decided they can't afford this kind of publicity, and they move with a celerity that never could have been achieved by gentler, private means.

"Now, most of us are sympathetic to such mothers, who are protecting the lives of their young ones, while we may not be sympathetic to college militants or to draft militants.

"But the idea behind it all is exactly the same. The mothers are 'taking the law into their own hands' by setting up a traffic barrier, and we scarcely blame them for it. We feel that social institutions should be more responsive toward people's needs in such cases.

"But why should mothers have to do this? Why should there be such an immediate payoff on illegality, and no payoff on quiet,

legal petitions to get changes made, or even seriously considered?

"This is what the fusses are all about, in the colleges and elsewhere: To show that institutions get hardening of the arteries, that they will not and do not listen to reasonable arguments, that only a show of force makes them sit up and take notice.

"This is a tragic situation — but the tragedy lies not in the militancy, rather it lies in the need for militancy. The militancy is only a symptom, and most of us deplore the symptom while ignoring the disease that it symbolizes. When you get nowhere with niceness, you feel you have blood, but against the prin- and our job is to create a social order in which niceness can get the same results as fast."

What does this analysis of our society say to us as Christians?

Searching The Scriptures

The Scripture for this lesson is Matthew 5:10-11; 6:25-34; 7:13-14; Ephesians 6:10-18. Selected verses are printed below. Matthew 5:10-11

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account."

Ephesians 6:10-18

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; 16 above all taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 Pray at all times in the Spirit,

with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.

Memory Selection: Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him. —James 1:12

Exploring The Questions

The two passages of Scripture under consideration in this lesson come from the Sermon on the Mount and the Book of Ephesians.

The passage from Ephesians needs further comment in two areas: the use of military language — breastplate, shield, helmet, sword — and the nature of evil powers, as these were viewed by the writer of the letter.

One scholar has suggested that the writer's use of military language comes primarily from Old Testament sources, especially Isaiah 59:17, in which the prophet pictures God as arming himself to fight for his people. Some ideas may come also from the messianic prophecy in Isaiah 11:4. The writer of Ephesians may well have expanded the comparison on the basis of his own observations of the ever-present soldiers of the army of Rome.

Christians, the writer asserts, are at war with the powers of evil, which are striving to overcome the cause of Christ. In the first century, belief in spiritual agents was universal. Even in the Gospels we read of angels and demons influencing people. To the author of Ephesians, invisible evil powers were behind all the trials and tribulations of the Christian.

Most persons no longer believe in demons and evil spirits as such, but we can understand this belief in part because we have all felt evil influence in our lives. The force of evil in the world is real. And Christians must find spiritual strength, or "armor," to live responsibly.

Finding Help With Your Questions

William Barclay has pointed out the basic reason why a Christian may find himself in conflict with his society:

"It is an abiding fact in the human situation that the Christian will always be liable to persecution of one kind or another for the reason that the Christian is bound to be the conscience of whatever community of which he may be a member. The Christian does not even need to speak; his presence and his life are a conscience to the sphere, the society, the circle in which he moves. It is not a matter of spoken criticism and constant fault-finding; it is not a matter

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ing Days past. Maybe there has been sorrow, too, for it serves to make us more grateful for the good things in life.

So good an institution as giving thanks should never be turned into a mere commercialized tradition as it is now in the hearts of those who love God, their fellowman, and are grateful for the life they have. No, it should not become filled with hypocrisy that has no meaning, and takes pleasure out of the day, but sometime during the day our thoughts should be sent heavenward.