

Sermon 2017-11-21 - Thanksgiving Service - The Rev. Christopher M. Klukas
James 1:17–27; Psalm 65:1–8; Matthew 6:25–33

- When we think about the origins of Thanksgiving, we often think of the Pilgrims. We don't as often think about Abraham Lincoln.
- Lincoln, at the urging of Sarah Josepha Hale, declared a national day of Thanksgiving on the last Thursday of November (though the day wasn't permanently established until 1941 by an Act of Congress).
- Abraham Lincoln, *Thanksgiving Proclamation*, 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."
- Lincoln continues, "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..." He goes on to enumerate many blessings, even in the context of the brutality of the civil war.
- It can be hard to give thanks when times are tough, but Lincoln knew that this is exactly what the nation needed.
- "*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*" (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18, ESV)
- Paul was no stranger to suffering and hardship, but he was always resolutely Thankful to God, in all circumstances.
- There is never a time when it is inappropriate to give thanks to God.
- In hard times, we may be overwhelmed by the difficulty that surrounds us, but God's blessings still abound if we stop to look for them.
- James 1:17 - Every good gift comes from God.
- Too often we forget to give credit where credit is due.
- When Lincoln has finished counting the blessings of the nation, he calls the people of America to turn and give thanks to God. "...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 one voice by the whole American People..."