

## Thanksgiving Reflection from Robin+

### Collect for the Day

Almighty and gracious Father, we give you thanks for the fruits of the earth in their season and for the labors of those who harvest them. Make us, we pray, faithful stewards of your great bounty, for the provision of our necessities and the relief of all who are in need, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*Moses said to all Israel: For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you.*

*Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good. Do not say to yourself, "My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth." But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today. Deuteronomy 8:7-18*

When you were growing up, did your mother make you write thank you notes? Mine did. It was just something that was expected, and I could count on it. After every birthday and Christmas I had a list of every gift received and I was reminded at least daily that I needed to write my thank you notes. I don't know why this was so difficult when I was young, but it was. How do you honestly thank your great aunt for those crazy gifts she sends every year? Even when the gift was great, it was just hard to stop and take the time to thank the giver. There were so many other things I wanted to be doing. It was not until I was older, that I began to appreciate the very act of being grateful, that I began to really recognize that I had so much to be thankful for.

I think that's what I love about Thanksgiving. A holiday set aside to be thankful. Instead of other holidays when gifts are expected, baskets must be filled with eggs and candy, costumes are needed, or trees decorated – Thanksgiving offers us something different. It's a day of sharing a meal, sharing memories, reconnecting with our family and friends, and being thankful for our blessings. Because we are in the middle of a pandemic, Thanksgiving may be very different for us this year.

It's possible that we are not feeling very thankful right now. It's been hard for most of us, to find that everything we assume or expect or come to rely on can suddenly disappear without warning. Perhaps this year, more than ever, taking time for gratitude is exactly what we need. And one of the best ways we can encourage an attitude of gratitude is by remembering.

In the scripture for today we hear Moses preparing the people of Israel for the Promised Land. Moses helps them remember that it was God who had brought them out of slavery in Egypt, it was God who provided for them in the Wilderness, and it was God who was going to lead them into a good land where they would lack nothing. This practice of remembering occurs throughout scripture. It began with the people of Israel remembering God's great deeds and we call it Salvation History. Through generations the story was told and retold of how God had worked in the past - God's presence could be seen in powerful ways, working in the lives of the most unlikely people, through the most adverse circumstances.

Sometimes when things are going well in the Promised Land, we forget to say thank you. For Israel their temptation was to believe they were self-sufficient now that they were out of the wilderness, to think they did not need God, and to forget the ways God had loved them and delivered them from slavery. This is what Moses was helping them to remember, so that they could be thankful. And the Spirit prompts us, like a gentle parent, to give God our thanks and praises, when we take time to be still and remember.

Is a life of thanksgiving something that we can cultivate? I think so. In fact, a connection has been made between being thankful and being made whole; it can be good for your health.

Robert Emmons is the author of *Thanks: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier*. Robert Emmons' work and writing, coming from a psychological perspective, reflects something saints from all ages have known – gratitude is the foundation of abundant life.

Emmons says that gratitude is an affirmation of goodness. We affirm that there are good things in the world, all evidence to the contrary sometimes, and we recognize that the source of this goodness is outside of ourselves. As we share our own salvation history we can remember those things for which we are most thankful in life and connect our story to God's story of salvation. Even in the middle of a pandemic there are things for which we are grateful.

Being thankful is at the heart of our Christian faith. No matter how you spend Thanksgiving this year, remember the story of the people of Israel, the story of your own salvation history, the ways you have seen God working in powerful ways, working in the lives of the most unlikely people, through these most adverse circumstances, and give thanks.

In this year of wilderness, God is preparing a Promised Land for us where we will lack nothing. Take a few minutes to be grateful and write a thank you note in the form of a prayer to the Giver of all good things. May we go forth into the rest of this day, into the rest of our lives, and be thankful that the Lord our God has brought us into a good land. Amen.

Here is a link to a beautiful collection of Hymns of Thanksgiving – enjoy!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoG1iW\\_IBJg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoG1iW_IBJg)