

Look Long on Thanksgiving

† **The price** (vv.13-15)

† **The record** (v.16)

† **The jewels** (vv.17,18)

In the name of Christ, the Lord our righteousness, dear fellow redeemed:

Certain things we human beans cannot explain. For instance, why did we suffer so long with Ketchup not coming out of the bottle? All it took was a larger cap, and an upside down label. Now we stand our Ketchup upside down. One more problem solved. But still there are questions like those of scientist Steven Wright: “The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.” Or what about the man who lamented, “I almost had a psychic girl friend....but she left me before we met.” “Okay, so what’s the speed of dark?” “How do you tell when you’re out of invisible ink?” “What happens if you get scared half to death twice?” “If everything seems to be going well, you obviously overlooked something.” “When everything is coming your way, you’re in the wrong lane.”

In the 1990’s many Americans thought everything was coming our way. Then came 911. But we survived, life went back to normal. The “Dot-Com’s” made multi-millionaires on the Internet – at least until someone noticed cyber paper’s not worth much. But the market bounced back on home mortgages based on housing prices that would never stop going up. Right? Now the “experts” say, “No one can fix this.” “When everything is coming your way, you’re in the wrong lane.” This is a perfect time to pull over, and **Take a Long Look at Thanksgiving**. Look through the eyes of the Holy Spirit first at...

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God’s people were back from Babylon hoping to enjoy the Promised Land. The LORD God made many promises so anticipation ran high. But as usual, people ignored the hardship His prophets predicted and wanted prosperity right away. In some ways they remind me of the first Pilgrims who tried to set up a socialist utopia by owning everything in common. Few felt the need to work if others did it for you. It wasn’t just that some American Indians taught them to hunt and fish. Hungry people have incentive to work. Trouble turned into praises for endless bounty. God’s Word works when we pay attention.

Malachi must have lived about the time of Governor Nehemiah because the problems and sins of the people are similar. With the city of Jerusalem mostly rubble it was impossible to even ride a donkey around the city walls. Everything was fallen down, and the Lord’s temple was burnt ash. And that’s how the people were living. They married without any concern for their faith. They mixed heathen religions with the worship of the true God. They dishonored the Sabbath by doing other things instead of assembling to worship and find rest for their souls hearing God’s Word.

Then they blamed God, saying, *“It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty? But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evildoers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape.”*

See any similarities with our society today? Would it not be easy for Christians this Thanksgiving to look around and conclude something like this? **“The price** is too high. We’ve worked so hard and sacrificed so much, but what do we have to show for it?” But don’t pull out into traffic just yet. **Look Long on Thanksgiving** and consider...

† **The record** (v.16)

“Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other....” It’s simply not possible for Christians to stay thankful and faithful without fellowship. Even two families worshipping in their homes will eventually go hard core with whatever TV preacher they hear most. Without encouragement of

fellow Christians, your faith, once burning like a red hot coal, soon grows dim and finally dies out. We need to *“not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but...encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”* (Hebrews 10:25 NIV)

The discouraged believers in Jerusalem had to get together and discuss how things were going and help each other remember God’s promises. As they worshiped in good fellowship together, it says, *“The LORD listened and heard,”* i.e., He paid close attention to their prayers and petitions and intercessions for each other. Then He did something really awesome.

“A scroll of remembrance was written in [the LORD’s] presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name.” The Bible talks about many different books that God has. One commentator suggests this *“scroll”* in Malachi is like the records Persian King Xerxes kept in the days of Esther. When he couldn’t sleep one night, Xerxes had his record read and discovered someone needed a reward. Mordecai had save his life by exposing an assassination attempt. That book saved the lives of Mordecai, Esther and all the Jews in the empire. God also has books which record all the sins which people do. But if you believe in Jesus, your record has one entry: *“Forgiven.”* Under the New Covenant the Lord says, *“Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.”* (Hebrews 10:17 KJV) But here Malachi is speaking of *“a scroll of remembrance”* which seems to be more than a record of deeds. God also talks about the Book of Life where He wrote the names of all people forgiven when Jesus died and rose again. But those who refuse to believe in Jesus have their names blotted out. Only those will be saved of whom the Lord promises, *“I will never blot his name from the book of life.”* (Revelation 3:5 NIV) The lesson here is clear as we take a **Long Look on Thanksgiving**. We may forget God many times daily, but He will never forget us. He keeps calling us back to Himself as...

† The jewels (vv.17,18)

Once I heard about a young man who was landscaping. There in the tall grass he found a beautiful diamond which was later appraised for \$1000’s. Pity the girl who lost it. But how wonderful for his fiancé. Men would rather look at a high powered rifle or a shiny concept car. But I don’t need to explain to the rest how a woman loves to look at a beautiful gem stone. Human love may not last, but *“diamonds are forever.”* And God’s love for us will never die because *“they will be mine,” says the LORD Almighty, “in the day when I make up my treasured possession.”* Like precious a precious jewel in the hands of a young lover. so the Lord looks at us who revere His name.

We are **The jewels** of God. *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”* (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV) There is a difference between holiness and *righteousness*. Holiness is a quality in God we cannot see, far beyond absolute perfection. But God’s holiness is seen in the *righteousness* He lives out in His faithful people. He says, *“I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.”* When you help someone in need, you are the righteous hands of God. When you go to the lonely and depressed to comfort them, you are the righteous feet and mouth of the Merciful One.

Distinctions come hard for the unregenerate. As Steven Wright observes, for many *“a clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.”* And their *“conscience is what hurts when all [their] other parts feel so good.”* But we see things differently when we **Look Long on Thanksgiving**. The Lord’s mercy keeps us serving Him who served us first in faithful perseverance. Since Christ died, Christ has risen and Christ will come again, *“therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”* (1 Corinthians 15:58 NIV) *“God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.”* (Hebrews 6:10 NIV) The Lord will make the distinctions clear soon. As His **jewels** on the **record** for His **price** thank the Lord. Amen.