

# THANKSGIVING REFLECTIONS THANKSGIVING REFLECTIONS THANKSGIVING REFLECTIONS

By Yvonne



On Thanksgiving Day in November 2002, after teaching my three classes at the Bible College from 8am to 3pm, a taxi took me about 45 minutes across the city to join missionaries who were celebrating American Thanksgiving complete with turkey and stuffing and pumpkin pie.

Although not my first time in Africa, it was my first time to celebrate Thanksgiving outside America. I was overwhelmed that day by the sight and smell of familiar food but also by the gratitude those missionaries expressed for blessings. I was thankful the missionaries were able to join together and celebrate the Thanksgiving of their homeland—one of the few days each year they had such a bountiful spread. It was a special privilege for me to be included as a member of their team and family.

That American Thanksgiving dinner at the missionary's home was perhaps the most significant Thanksgiving I've celebrated in my life. We ate at a table of plenty in the midst of a people in the village who had neither a table nor plenty. We sat on chairs whose legs rested on a tiled floor in the midst of a people who lived in huts with dirt for floors. Electricity was intermittent. Sometimes it worked. Sometimes it didn't. Most huts had one bare bulb hanging down in the middle of the room. Temperatures in the tropics were always hot and there was no air conditioning to ease perspiration. Termite mounds were as tall as the huts.

There was an obvious contrast to be seen between American prosperity and the lack among nearby residents, many who did not have an indoor toilet or running water. In most areas, a water pump could be found, but there was no choice of hot or cold water. Pumped water was poured into a large tub outside the hut in full view of passers by, and the children in the family were immersed and washed one after the other. For sure, they had not experienced a table spread with an abundance and variety of foods from which they could eat until there was no room to take another bite.

Third world countries have struggled to empower their people across all socioeconomic groups. There are those of higher rank who live well and shop freely, yet a large percentage of their citizens live below poverty level.

On every trip I've made to a third world country, I've come back to the comfort of my home in America with an overwhelming feeling of God's mercy and provision. Why us?

I think this question was answered several years ago by a visiting teacher from Nigeria. I asked what made him want to come to the USA, to which he responded:

*I read about America and their God and how He was blessing them. The more I read, the more I determined to come to America and meet their God. I thought perhaps I could convince Him to come back to Africa with me and prosper my country.*

Those of us in America would do well to ponder the Nigerian brother's words.

The American holiday of Thanksgiving traces its roots all the way back to 1621, when colonists held a harvest feast with local natives. In 1861, Abraham Lincoln declared an official Thanksgiving Day in late November. In the 1930s, President Franklin Roosevelt consented to make it an official holiday to be celebrated on the fourth Thursday of each November. Over the years, due to financial prosperity and advanced technology, specific traditions and customs associated with the holiday have evolved from watching afternoon football games to marking the beginning of the holiday shopping season. The basic components of the holiday, celebrating food and the fall harvest and giving thanks with family, have remained over time.

My research came up with only nine other countries of the world that celebrate a National Thanksgiving Day: Canada, China, Germany, Grenada, Japan, Norfolk Island, South Korea, Liberia, and Viet Nam.\*

In all due respect, neither the United States or any other country can lay claim to "thanksgiving." Verses are scattered throughout the bible reminding us to be thankful, to come to God with thanksgiving in our hearts, to give thanks for all of His wonderful gifts.

Whether poor or rich with wealth, whether sick or ill in health, our hearts should be full of thanksgiving to our God for giving His Son with thanksgiving so that we might have life abundantly here and now: A life that carries us into life eternally with no distinctions between us and any other of His children who inherit eternal life.

Reflect on His grace and mercy and express thanksgiving to Him! Here are a few scriptures to fuel your thanksgiving:

With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD. –Ezra 3:11

*I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving. – Psa. 69:30*

Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. -Psa. 95:2

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. –Psa.100:4*

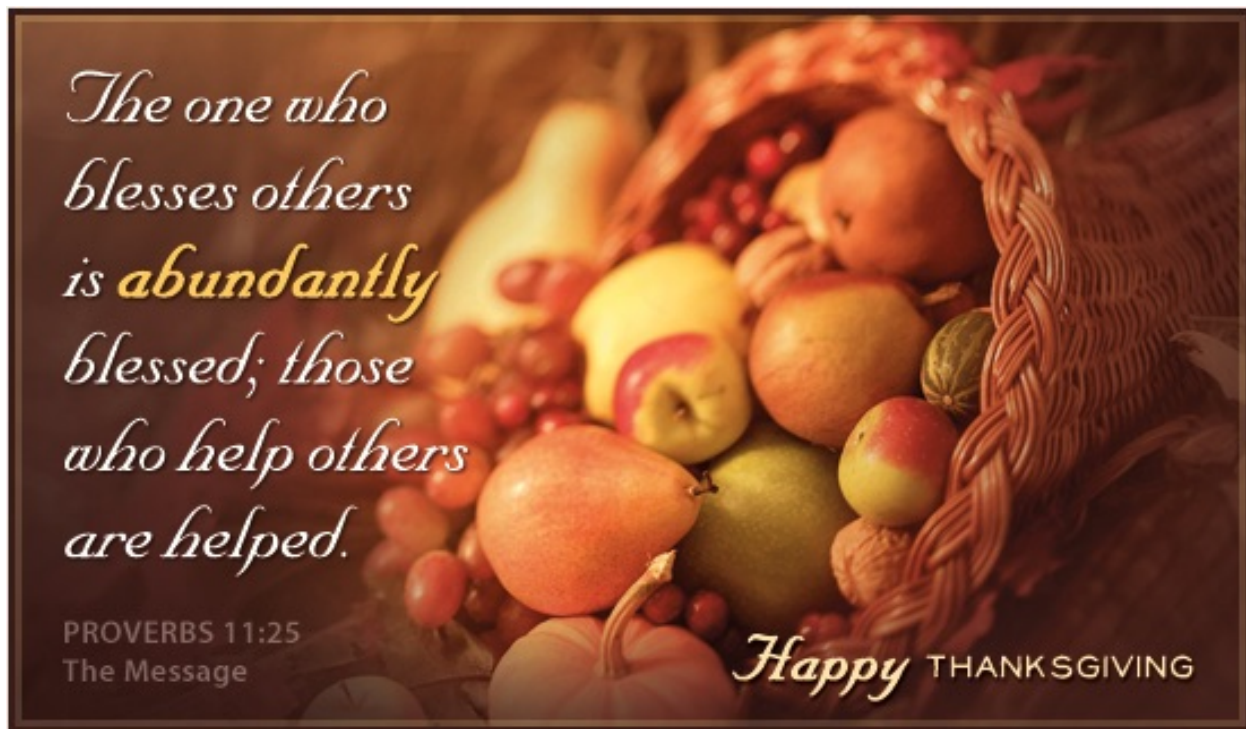
From them will come songs of thanksgiving and the sound of rejoicing. –Jer. 30:19

*All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. – 2 Cor. 4:15*

You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. -2 Cor. 9:11

*Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. –Eph.5:4*

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. –Phil.4:6



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\* <https://tinyurl.com/ybzru34u>