

**True thanksgiving is that thanksgiving to God which comes from Himself**

Can thanksgiving be beaten to death? Well, clearly, Thanksgiving Day can be. It is, when all of November is turned into Thanksgiving, so that by the time the day itself arrives, it seems like an afterthought; as if all is said and done already, and there is nothing left, other than turkey and gravy. A bit like what happens to Christmas, is it not? Even worse, how can it not come to seem as if there really were never really all that much to be said and done to begin with, when the actual giving of thanks to God is replaced by a month of vapid musings on vague ideas of just generally being thankful?

Even thanksgiving itself, as the actual giving of thanks, can be beaten to death, as can thankfulness, when we are left to ourselves and our own devices. In the lives of some of us, there are times when we just cannot convince ourselves that life is just wonderful, and that we just have soooo much to be thankful for - not even by such sophisticated psychological techniques as being nice to others, or counting our blessings rather than our burdens. When burdens become burdensome enough, we cannot help but feel them; to pretend otherwise is to lie, to ourselves, and to God, as well as to others. And when being thankful is presented as an obligation, or rather: pretending to be thankful, and convincing ourselves that we are, although we are not, well, so often this demand to deceive ourselves, and others, and God, will be but yet another devastating burden.

Ever so much more tragic is this, as we are not actually left to ourselves and our own devices. It is really not up to us to make ourselves thankful, or to come up with things for which to give thanks.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul," says the Psalm, "and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."

Christian worship is thanksgiving to God for His salvation. It sets the goodness of God before us as that which is real, even when the burdens of this life are unbearable; and by doing that, it sets us free from having to pretend or convince ourselves that they are not. It allows us, instead, to live in thanksgiving to God at all times, even when bearing the heaviest of burdens, assured by His Word that His love is upon us, and that, as such, all will be well, and is, in fact, well already.