

“Giving Thanks for What Is Truly Precious”

Leviticus 22:29 *And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the LORD, offer it at your own will.*

1 Chronicles 16:34 *O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Psalms 100:4 *Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.*

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Many people in our culture think of thanksgiving as just a holiday, a day on which to gorge oneself and to subsequently collapse into a semi-comatose state on the sofa.

We, as Christians, are more aware of the origins of this holiday, as well as the truer significance of the word *thanksgiving*. We also understand the need to regularly think on those things for which we should give thanks.

Of course, the first things we think of when giving thanks are usually things like our health, our families, our children, our freedoms, and the God-given blessings that have come along with home schooling our children. We are truly blessed to have been able to spend time with our children that many others don't even know about—moments that we might never have had if our time with our children were limited by a school schedule set by our local school districts. For these things we are truly thankful, as we should be.

While considering what I would share with you this evening, I thought that I would like to take this opportunity to share with you those things for which I am truly thankful. Having decided this, I began to ponder those things that have personally blessed my life.

Of course, I also thought of all the things I have already listed—my health and the health of my family; my husband, my daughter, my son, as well as my extended family; the freedom to home school my children and to worship in the fellowship of my choice and the opportunities for spiritual growth that this has given me.

However, there is something else I am especially grateful for, another reason that I am thankful to have been able to home school, and sharing that with you requires imparting something that few of you know about me.

When I first began to home school, and when I first joined this home school group, back in 1998, I was that, which is commonly known as a nominal Christian. The truth is that I was even worse than what we often think of when we hear that term; I wasn't even a pew-warmer. No, there was no pew anywhere being warmed by me at that time; I hadn't been to any church since 1977, except for the occasional wedding or funeral. As a result, on the evening that I attended my first parent meeting, when asked by the chapter leader what church I belonged to, I hardly knew what to say. I think I said I was currently “between churches.” Having attended churches in my younger years, and with the Lord's planning for me to attend once again (unbeknownst to me at the time), I had no idea how true that statement was about to become. When asked to read and sign the LEAH statement of faith, I had no problem doing so because, after all, intellectually I agreed with all the points listed. I didn't disagree with any of them.

How unaware I was of what God had in store for me over the course of the next few years.

Home schooling alongside other (and more actively) Christian ladies, I witnessed the faithfulness with which they exposed their children to the Word of God. Having now been convicted of my failure to do the same, I now added Bible study as a subject for my children during our school day. Through this daily exposure to His Word, the Lord worked in me over the next few years. After many stumbles (and even falls), He opened my eyes. What a surprise it was for me to discover that, during all those years that I

thought I was a Christian, simply because I believed all I had heard about the Lord Jesus Christ, I was simply being drawn to Christ by the Father.

Thinking I had been reborn back in 1974, I still had to learn that faith does not mean believing all I had ever heard about the Lord Jesus Christ—that He was the Son of God, that His death paid for my sins, and even that He rose from the dead—surely even the devils believe that and know it as fact. I still had to learn that it means letting go of any hope of anything in me that would or could enable me to choose to follow our Lord before Father God made the first (and every) move upon my spiritually dead soul. I had to learn that it means placing ALL of my trust and hope completely in Christ and what He has finished. I had to learn that it means discarding the notion that my subsequent good works would secure or complete what the Lord has already done (or that they were even my own works at all). I still had many heights from which to fall, many misconceptions about myself to abandon, many sins to be shown, and many tears to weep. Simply put, I had to die completely. Although the process felt horribly painful at the time, I had yet to discover how good the Father was to me in bringing me through it. I had yet to learn that “*whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth*” (Pr 3:12), that “*the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance*” (Romans 2:4), and that “*whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*” (Heb 12:6).

Having been shown these things by a merciful, loving Father, I dare to say that I may be starting to understand what it means to find that pearl of great price. I am here before you today, declaring that there is nothing more precious than this gift of salvation. There is no prize greater than the prize of Christ Himself. Of all the things we have to be thankful for—and we have so many—there is nothing that compares or measures up to the gift of salvation, of being saved from our own sin and the power of death it is capable of holding over us.

I could speak to you all evening and never find the words to aptly express the scope of gratitude that I feel, and SHOULD feel, for what the Father has done for me. I don't think there are any adequate words, just as there are no words to describe the scope of His infinite mercy, goodness, power, and glory.

However, I do know this. From my own perspective, there has never been anyone as undeserving as I have been to receive the priceless gift of faith in Jesus Christ. It is impossible for me to fathom the distance He has brought me—from such depths of hopelessness to such heights of grace, mercy, and a glorious eternity in His presence. It is equally impossible to express the kind of gratitude that this deserves. But I hope I have begun to.

Even if our earthly liberties should be taken away, and we can no longer worship as freely as we have become accustomed to doing, even if we should enter a period of extreme persecution, putting life and limb at risk, we still have everything. Nothing in this world, even the freedoms we have been blessed to enjoy, can equal or come close to what the Father has given us in His Son through the power of His Holy Spirit. To Him be the praise, honor, power, and glory forever.

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Psalms 118:14-23 The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly. The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death. Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.

Psalms 69:30 I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.