

Thankful Hearts and Empty Cupboards
Habakkuk 3:17-19

Thanksgiving is approaching. Have you considered how privileged we are here in America?

Statistically, **3,000** Calories are consumed by the average person at Thanksgiving dinner. **45 Million turkeys** will be eaten this Thanksgiving. **50 million pumpkin pies** are eaten at Thanksgiving, **40 million green bean casseroles** are made. And **72 million of cans of Ocean Spray Cranberry Sauce** purchased each year.

<http://shine.yahoo.com/shine-food/surprising-thanksgiving-day-food-facts-2414008.html>

The one statistic that causes me concern is the 3,000 calories! There goes my diet! But let's consider the first Thanksgiving in America. It was in the fall of 1621, one year after the Pilgrim's landed. There was great affliction in their voyage. 102 Pilgrims the left Holland, stopped briefly in England before sailing to America. They were at sea for 66 days. There were fierce Atlantic storms, so severe that at the half-way point, the sailors debated whether or not to turn back to England. Their accommodations were very limited, with all 102 Pilgrims below deck in the ship's hold which was smaller than a Volleyball court! With the hatches closed to keep out the beating ocean, the air grew Foul, making their sea-sick condition even worse. There were no fires, and little water. Two Pilgrims did not survive the journey, and two were born during the journey.

When they landed in Massachusetts, they had no place to go. There were no villages. No stores. No one to welcome them. No way to restock their ship. They lived on and off the ship, surviving basically on the ships provision through the first winter. They built one make-shift building, and lived in fear of the Natives who were not known. They were supposed to land somewhere north of current NYC on the Hudson river, but strong winds kept them from getting there. 47 of the 102 pilgrims died during the first winter! Governor William Bradford wrote concerning their faith, "*God gave them health and strength in a good measure; and shewed them by experience ye truth of yt word, Deut. 8. 3. Yt man liveth not by bread only, but by every word yt proceedeth out of ye mouth of ye Lord doth a man live.* Bradford, William (2011-03-17). Bradford's History of 'Plimoth Plantation' From the Original Manuscript. With a Report of the Proceedings Incident to the Return of the Manuscript to Massachusetts (p. 133). Kindle Edition.

The Pilgrims encountered an Indian named Samoset. He spoke broken English, and led them to another Indian named Squanto, whose English was better. Squanto was from the militaristic Patuxet tribe. He had been captured and taken into slavery. He was Purchased by 2 priests who granted him his freedom, and secured passage back to America, only to find that his **tribe had been killed**. Had his tribe still been alive, they would have certainly killed the Pilgrims when they landed. Further, the fields they left

behind did not need to be cleared, and Squanto taught the Pilgrims how to plant Maize in the very fields of his ancestors! Squanto was taken in by the **Wampanoag** tribe, and Chief **Massassoit**. Squanto taught the Pilgrims how to catch fish, plant corn, pick fruits and berries. After a successful harvest, during that first summer of 1621, Governor Bradford called for a FEAST DAY. He invited Massassoit, who came with 90 Indian guests! They brought 5 dressed deer and 12 fat wild turkeys. They helped in preparation and taught the Pilgrim women how to make a tasty pudding from cornmeal and maple syrup, and how to **roast dried kernels of corn** in an earthen pot until it popped, fluffy and white!

I never tire of hearing this important part of our history.
Would you be thankful if there was no Turkey?
Would you be thankful if there was no football?
Would you be thankful if there was no job?

Today, I would like for us to consider an EXHORTATION to focus our THANKFULNESS on GOD and not on the THINGS that he gives us!

I am concerned that our Thanksgiving celebrations might cause us to focus more on the things that we have, than the God who gave them to us.

The focus of your gratitude is the same as the focus of your faith.

If your gratitude is for THINGS, in reality, you are BOUND to those things.

If your gratitude is focused on GOD who provides all things, then you will have a thankful heart regardless of your circumstances.

Habakkuk 3:17–19 is a powerful and beautiful passage concerning thanksgiving. The amazing thing about this passage of praise is that it occurs in the middle of very troubling times. *"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights."*

One of the most poetic passages of praise in the Bible.

At the time Habakkuk wrote. God's Judgment was Imminent

The TIME was 606-604 BC. The first wave of the Babylonian invasion would begin shortly. In 605 BC, Daniel and others were taken captive. Jerusalem was about to be defeated, after a narrowly escaping for many years. Judah was living under the illusion of safety. **Jeremiah 7:4** *"Do not trust in deceptive words and say, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!"*

The question for YOU and ME is this *Does your thankfulness depend on your prosperity?* Habakkuk was thankful and filled with praise even though his life was filled with trials.

God was going to judge Judah. When the Babylonians conquered the city, the righteous and the wicked suffered in the same way.

God's People were Blind . The book centers around **Habakkuk's two questions:** The first is found in Habakkuk 1:3-4: *"Why does God tolerate Judah's sins?"* To this question, God provides the following answers.

1. He will not allow the sin to go on forever
2. He would soon judge Judah by allowing Babylon to conquer his holy city.

The second question upon which the book is built is found in Habakkuk 1:12-13. *"Why does God tolerate the Babylonians as His instrument against the chosen people?"* Again, God answers.

1. The **righteous** in Judah would **suffer** just as much as the wicked
2. God would use the Babylonians **for His purpose** and **in His time**.
3. The wicked live only for this life.
4. By contrast, the righteous live by faith. Most of Judah was blind and choose to live their lives in ignorance of the Lord's will and for momentary pleasures. But the righteous are different. They live for God and not the things of this world. They live by faith. This vers is the most familiar in Habakkuk, and one of the most familiar in the Old Testament. It is quoted in Romans 1:17 and Hebrews 10:38. **Habakkuk 2:2-4** *"Then the LORD replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright— but the righteous will live by his faith—"*

There is an important QUESTION for YOU and ME: *Is your confidence in material things and good health, or is your confidence in the LORD?*

1. Faith that suffering is temporary
2. Faith that injustice will be judged
3. Faith that godliness will be rewarded
4. Faith that saints will inherit the earth
5. Faith that the Righteous will be blessed
6. Faith that Jesus will never leave you or forsake you
7. Faith that lies will be uncovered
8. Faith that the truth will be revealed

9. Faith that no matter what happens, you will see God face to face
Job 19:23–27 *Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"*
10. Faith that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor 15:58)

Our Satisfaction and Strength can Only be in God.

Things were about to go from BAD to WORSE. Note the expanding set of circumstances of which Habakkuk writes. In Habakkuk 3:17. *"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,"*

1. Figs were a delicacy. They were dried and provided a delightful tasty treat and nourishment.
2. Grapes brought joy and refreshment. Provided celebration, joy, nourishment.
3. Olives were also a source of joy, but also an **important part of nearly everything they ate**. Difficult to cook without olive oil. Source of lighting. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oil_lamp)
4. Finally, sheep and cattle were the main source of wealth. Food. Milk. This is the last thing that someone would give up.
5. *"The loss of any of these individually might be survived. Together, the losses spelled economic disaster and devastating loss of hope—loss of their daily provisions, loss of their economic strength, loss of the Lord's blessing due to their sin"* Kenneth L. Barker, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 375.

The importance of livestock is seen in the life of Jacob. When his family is running out of food because of the famine, he sends them to Egypt to buy grain with SILVER (Gen 42:25). When they return and eventually run out of food again, Jacob sends them with the best food of the land, and with more silver (Gen 43:11-13). **Only when their money was gone, did the Egyptians and others surrender their livestock. Genesis 45:13-16** Eventually, Jacob is brought to Egypt with his flocks and herds.

Habakkuk is telling us that no matter how bad things get, even to the point of total poverty and need, he will still worship God and give him thanks for all that he has done.

This brings us back to the Second Pilgrim Winter. After the first Thanksgiving with Massosiat and the Indians, the Pilgrims were excited that another ship arrived with **35 new colonists**. **Quoting again from William Bradford**, *“they were all landed; but there was not so much as bisket-cake or any other victialls [AO] for them, neither had they any bedding, but some sory things they had in their cabins, nor pot, nor pan, to dresse any meate in; nor [overcoats] for many of them had brusht away their coats & cloaks at Plimoth as they came. ... The plantation was glad of this addition of strenght, but could have wished that many of them had been of beter condition, and all of them beter furnished with provissions.* Bradford, William (2011-03-17). Bradford's History of 'Plimoth Plantation' From the Original Manuscript. With a Report of the Proceedings Incident to the Return of the Manuscript to Massachusetts (p. 109). Kindle Edition. The food that was stored would have to feed twice as many. That winter, **RATIONS** were reduced to **5 kernels of corn per day!** However, not one of them died from starvation!

The Pilgrims were just as thankful, even when they had very little. Their trust in the Lord was never shaken because it was not dependent on material things.

Habakkuk 3:17–19 *“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, ” “yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. ” “The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights. For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.”*

The focus of your gratitude is the same as the focus of your faith.
Trust God and give him Thanks for all that He sends into your life.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 *“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”*