

## THOUGHTS FOR THANKSGIVING

### INTRODUCTION

Rowland Howard once put into words a very simple, yet a very profound fact of life when he said: "You never miss the water until the well runs dry". The meaning of those words is not particularly difficult for us to grasp. They simply mean that we never stop to realize how much we depend on water as long as we have all that we want. As long as we can turn on the faucet and see the fresh, clean pure water flow out without the slightest sign of stopping, we don't think too much about it. We take it for granted. In fact, we're even so bold as to waste some of it. Not until there comes a dry summer and we're limited in the amount of water that we can use, not until we turn on the faucet and hear the empty rush of air, do we begin to realize how much we depend on water - to quench our thirst, to bathe our bodies, to water our gardens and to wash our clothes.

"You never miss the water until the well runs dry". It's true of a great many things in life that really matter. For instance, we never really appreciate food until we're forced to go a day or two without a meal. We never realize what a blessing health is until we're sick, or see someone else who is extremely ill. We never realize how much the church means to us until we're in a place where there is no church, and then we begin to realize how much we counted on it. Even the people that we love the most we are apt sometimes to take for granted, not fully realizing how much they mean to us until we're in danger of losing them. And then, rather late in the day, we begin to count them among our treasures. Even God himself we take for granted, not realizing how dependent we are on him until we go through one of those terrible periods that we refer to as a "dark night of the soul".

"You never miss the water until the well runs dry". I'm not suggesting this this morning with any intent to scold. Far from it, I'm simply suggesting it as a fact about human nature, for it is true that most of us do not miss the water until the well runs dry. And added to this fact is another observation, one also drawn from our own experience, namely this that usually the most thankful people are the ones who have been through some dark hours of life and have experienced difficult days. Right away we're reminded of the Pilgrim Fathers of 1621, and how thankful they were on that first Thanksgiving. They had been desparately hungry. They had been through one long devastating winter, and it had mowed many of down like the grass of the field, and now when the harvest assured them of more than enough food for the next winter, their gratitude was unbounded and unlimited.

### DEVELOPMENT

"You never miss the water until the well runs dry". I'd like to have you think about this today, in feference to your own life, letting your imagination run off in all different directions. You know as well as I do that there are many things and many people we take for granted; things and people for which and for whom we ought to be very thankful.

As I was preparing this sermon this past week, I kept thinking back to something that happened three years about this time of year. The teen-age young people connected with the church that I was serving at that time gave an offering to CARE, and it, in turn, was

used to send packages of surplus food to people in Europe and Asia. Letters soon came back to us from people who had received these packages. Their sense of gratitude was almost beyond our understanding - so much of it for so little. One can of dried milk, one can of salted butter, one can of cheese - such as these filled their hearts with thankfulness. There was one letter that came back which I filed away hoping someday to weave it into a sermon on Thanksgiving Day Sunday. I'd like to share the letter with you this morning:

Dear Sir Reverend:

At first, I have to excuse me, that I thank you so late for your find parcel. You have no idea how glad I was when it arrived. The fresh butter, I like so much, here butter is so expensive, that I never buy it. And the cheese is so very good, every day I think gratefull for you. The milk also is good, every day I think you are not angry that I send some of it to my cousin in East Germany. He also will have a great joy. I have all the things in the cellar, so I have for a long time.

Excuse that I am writing so late, I was with my grandchildren, they also have children. We all are full of gratitude for the American people who help so much the unknown, that is a practical Christianity. I think we have to learn from you so much.

You can be assured that I think full of gratitude for you. I am sorry the letter is full of faults, long ago I went to the school. Please excuse me.

Agnes.....  
(driven away from  
her home in Silesia)  
76 years old.

So much gratitude for so little. And perhaps it wouldn't be out of place for me to remind you that we're still collecting clothes for over-seas relief here at the church. People in flight from the Eastern portion of Germany are now facing a German winter, and we ought not to forget the people. The need is as great as it ever was. We can all share something. Bring it to the church before Saturday, and we'll handle it from that point on.

Dale Carnegie, in his book, "HOW TO STOP WORRYING AND START LIVING" refers to a conversation that he once had with Eddie Rickenbacker. He asked him what the biggest lesson was that he had learned from drifting about with his companions for twenty-one day in life rafts, hopelessly lost in the Pacific. "The biggest lesson I learned from that experience" he said "was that if you have all the fresh water you want to drink and all the food you want to eat, you ought never to complain about anything". *Some thing, I suppose, all of us would do well to remember....*

It is true, is it not, that usually the most thankful people are those who have experienced trouble in their own lives and have worked their way through it.

TROUBLE: ITS RELATION

Perhaps this puts trouble in a new light. To be sure, no one enjoys trouble. We all guard against it. In fact, our whole economy is planned to protect us from trouble and to keep us comfortable from the cradle to the grave. But in spite of all we can do, there are times when trouble hits us all. The well runs dry, so to speak, sooner or later. And when the trouble comes, we become very aware of the water itself, and of our dependence upon it. I suppose we knew it all the time, but we never really took it in. And so one well after another may run dry. The body gives out, we lose our job, our money slowly disappears, the person we love is taken from us, we lights all around us begin to go out. We know from experience that when this happens to some people they go all to pieces, but not most people. Most people begin to grow. They grow more conscious of life outside themselves and beyond themselves. They grow in their understanding of life. The range of their sympathies increases, and their imaginations begin to stretch so that perhaps for the first time they see how others live, and through what dark and deep valleys they have had to travel.

And so when the well begins to fill up once again (as it normally does), then their hearts sing for joy and they enter the ranks of those who praise God from whom all blessings flow. On the other hand, the well may not fill up. It may remain as dry as the desert sand. The body may not recover its strength. The person you love may not get well. The money may not begin to flow in again. The food may not arrive. The tide may not turn. WHAT THEN?? When that happens a man must then dig a deeper well. This is what a man in the country may do if his well goes dry and it appears it is not going to fill up. He digs a deeper well. And in turn this is what a person in trouble ought to do. He ought to reach down to the deeper wells, to the spiritual resources that hitherto may have been untapped; he digs deeper and deeper until he strikes the vein of the unseen world, and in this new world his life expands and takes on a new dimension.

Have you ever stopped to consider who the greatest people are that you have ever known? Not great in the sense that their names may appear in WHO'S WHO, but great in the sense that they were or are transmitters of life to everybody around them? Are they the ones whose wells never went dry? I don't think so. Aren't they ← the ones who almost in every case, when their well went dry, either waited patiently for the rains to fill it up again, or dug a deeper well nearby. And which are the great nations of the earth, and at what hour were they at their greatest? When the well was full, or dry? I leave that for you to answer, and I move quickly on to think of our own nation in the light of some of these things that we have been touching upon here this morning.

OUR OWN NATION  
IN LIGHT OF ALL THIS

I might as well come directly to the point. In this country our danger, at the present time, is not poverty, but prosperity. Our trouble is not that we have too little. Our trouble is that we have almost too much for our own good. Our well is overflowing, at least at the moment, and the oil wells of Texas are a symbol of the extravagant wealth of our country. It would be silly for me to suggest that there's anything intrinsically evil about it, because

there isn't. But it is only common sense to say that in the light of history, no nation ever thrives for long on prosperity. When a nation begins to take for granted the water and the oil, the coal and the soil, the waterways and the harbors - when it begins to waste such things instead of thanking God for them, - when it becomes aware only of its own life forgetting the life of the world around it, then it is on the verge of danger and decay. There are nations in the world today that may go down because they have too little. Wars is a different danger. We may go down because we have too much.

CLOSING "You never miss the water until the well runs dry"....so goes the proverbial wisdom. It isn't strictly true to say that we never miss the water until the well runs dry, because sometimes we do. There are some people who do appreciate the water before it runs dry. There are some people who are aware and sensitive in the midst of plenty. There are some people who are thankful and who do appreciate their families and friends while they are in their immediate company.

They are the ones who have made it almost a habit to give thanks. To think of the water when they turn it on and silently thank God for it. To think of the food on the table and acknowledge their dependence upon it and their good fortune in having it. They are the ones whose imaginations begin to stretch so that while they are enjoying a huge Thanksgiving Day dinner, they can still think of the people across the seas who seldom get a square meal, and they can imagine what it is like to be hungry. They are the ones who next Thursday will make it a point to get to church instead of hurrying out to a football game or off to see the Macy's parade. They appreciate the fact that the spirit of man must be trained just the same as his body, and if they do not set specific times to stop and think about the serious things in life, these things little by little slip away and are forgotten. The result may be that their families grow up in prosperity with more than enough food, with two or three automobiles, with good schools and every opportunity to succeed. But the cupboard inside is bare. The awareness, the sensitiveness, the imagination which are the qualities of greatness in a man have been left to lie idle until they are limp and powerless. As long as the well is full, they never miss the water, let alone thank God for it, and when the well runs dry, the dryness of the well is exceed only by the dryness of their own spirit.

Well then, these are just some of the thoughts I wanted to share with you on this Thanksgiving Day Sunday. Some of you may be saying - well, that's just about what I expected to hear. That may be true, but I think it's well for us to be reminded of some of the things from time to time. Most of us have a great deal for which to be thankful. Never forget however that with prosperity and privilege there goes a genuine responsibility of sharing what we have with others. We have been a most  favored  people. We ought to be a most  generous  people. We have been a most  blessed  people. We ought to be a most thankful people. And so may your Thanksgiving experience in the year of our Lord 1958, be tempered with humility, by sympathy for those who lack abundance, and by compassion for those in want.

PRAYER: Help us our Father to appreciate the simple beauty and the mysterious glory of thy creation. Save us from taking it for granted. Spare us too from softness of spirit and hardness of heart. Let our thankfulness continue as long as we live. Amen

4305 Broadway, N.Y. 10039  
Nov. 15<sup>th</sup> 1964.

Dear Mr. Lorry:

Last month

I sent a postal money order  
for four dollars my pledge  
for October but failed to  
send in the envelope with  
it. The painters were here  
and the apt. was upset so  
that is the reason.

I enclose the  
church budget also my pledge  
card which I am enclosing.  
So as not to confuse you I will  
also send my October envelope  
along with my money order  
for five dollars my pledge for  
November.

The year 1964 is  
passing into history and it  
has been a year of heartache  
and trouble around the world.  
We in this country  
are blessed of God but many fail

2

to thank our Heavenly Father for these everyday simple needs such as water. Some of my friends up the state and only 120 miles from the city are really desperate as their wells have gone dry they have lived there all their lives and this is the first time it has happened.

May God help us who are true believers in Jesus Christ to live closer to Him.

Trust you will all have a very happy Thanksgiving day.

Sincerely yours,  
Mabel E. Miller.

P.S. Thank you for the Park  
Asenew it is very interest-  
-ing.