

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. (Psalm 95 NRSV)

I did some investigation about thanksgiving and found that George Washington first proclaimed a National Day of Thanksgiving in 1789, although some were opposed to it. There was discord among the colonies, many feeling the hardships of a few Pilgrims did not warrant a national holiday. And later, President Thomas Jefferson scoffed at the idea of having a day of thanksgiving.

So, in 1863, President Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday in November as a national day of Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving was proclaimed by every president after Lincoln. The date was changed a couple of times, most recently by Franklin Roosevelt, who set it up one week to the next-to-last Thursday in order to create a longer Christmas shopping season. Public uproar against this decision caused the president to move Thanksgiving back to its original date two years later. And in 1941, Thanksgiving was finally sanctioned by Congress as a legal holiday, as the fourth Thursday in November.

What does this mean? Well, Thanksgiving Day is a day we are to reflect on our blessings. For many this is hard to do because of several reasons. But for most, the reasoning of thanksgiving tends to be football and feasting while we visit with relatives. I want us to reflect on something. Have we in a way, developed a blindness to our blessings? And I'm not only talking about our material blessings.

The psalmist today, in Psalm 95 said, "Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord." You have to wonder how it is that the early Colonists' started a religious holiday that has evolved for so many people into a celebration of little more than feasting and football. Through most of our history, Thanksgiving has been our one truly American sacred holiday, a day of worship that crossed denominational boundaries.

Let's look at this another way. Here at church, we are blessed to have so many people back in worship! We even had to add a few more rows of chairs to the sanctuary seating last week! It's great to have our mid-

westerners back in the area and we are blessed they are in church even though Covid still seems to be very active in our area. We can even hear people singing on Sunday morning on the live video feed on Facebook!

This is not the situation for so many churches and areas around the country. Across the country, a diminishing number of religious pilgrims are making the effort to go to church and "sing to the Lord" and "make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!" (v. 1). More and more, it seems that a sense of gratitude is fading from both our church and our culture.

Back in Puritan New England, Thanksgiving was the main holiday of the year, a day of churchgoing and prayer in a religious culture that considered Christmas and Easter to be inferior holidays - polluted with pagan customs. Giving thanks has always been one of the pillars of a worship service. The Lord is "a great God," trumpets Psalm 95, "and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed" (vv. 3-5). On this Thanksgiving Day, let us give thanks for the presence of God in everyday life, in the moments that we discover healing and wholeness. The moment to begin is now. To be pilgrims on a journey of thanksgiving. Let us give thanks and praise to our Lord, Jesus Christ and God bless our church! AMEN