

On The Frontier

“For the glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel”

“Playing Ketchup”

by Linus A. Mathis III

Once again we are entering that time of year where our entire Nation will set aside a day for the express purpose of rendering thanks to God. At least that's the way it's supposed to be! We may still be, I believe, the ONLY country in the world that has such a holiday. So, even though it's no longer given the correct appreciation, I'm still most grateful for such a time. Of course I'm speaking of Thanksgiving Day. And I'm quite confident that you, being as in love with God as you are, cherish this opportunity with all your heart.

The concept behind this day is most godly. Unfortunately our Nation has lost perspective of our God and His goodness. The original meaning and purpose for this forthcoming national holiday is every bit as wonderful today as it was when it was first instituted. I thought the following would bless you and enhance your appreciation for the day.

The First Thanksgiving Proclamation

"Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly implore His protection and favor - and whereas both houses of Congress have by their joint committee requested me to recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts, the many signal

favors of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.

Now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the people of these states to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be...And great Lord and Ruler of nations and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions...To protect and guide all sovereigns and nations - to promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science among them and us - and generally to grant unto all mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as He alone knows to be best."

George Washington
October 3, 1789

What a wonderful heart of reverence and thanksgiving toward our magnificent God. This is what He so richly deserves. How wonderful to think about that on a national level, if only for one day, and if only by a few. My request to the Father is that I be counted among that number.

Perhaps you've noticed how hectic things are becoming these days. This happens every year, doesn't it? But this year we seem to be approaching new levels of anxiety. Is this God's Will for us?

Philippians 4:6
Be careful [anxious] for nothing;

but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Since this is a command it's obvious that being anxious is never God's Will for our lives. The proper response to the temptation to be anxious is prayer and supplication with THANKSGIVING!

Verse 7:

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The peace of God shall (absolutely) keep our hearts and minds. Isn't that AWESOME!

That being said, this is still a fast paced time of year. Most of us are faced with the rather large task of preparing for what usually proves to be the largest meal of the year. And as wonderful as that meal can be it still can represent a sizable cost. Many of us will have a house full of friends and family and as wonderful as that is, we are faced with many labor intensive days and nights. As you well know life (as we normally conduct it) doesn't slow down or cooperate. If anything, it seems to lack any reasonable semblance of compliance (like my male Malamute, Boaz). Rather, adding every conceivable obstacle. In other words, instead of things getting easier, they get harder. And at a time when expedience is paramount. Lest we forget, December is fast approaching. Is the game "catch-up"

being played in your life? It is in mine. Man, am I thankful for the direction given in Philippians! Nevertheless, giving thanks and being thankful can be worlds apart. It's up to us to embrace both.

There's a record in the Old Testament that is among my favorites. It illustrates magnificently how a grateful people, head over heels in love with God, humbly offered thanksgiving.

I Chronicles 29:1-5

Furthermore David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, *is yet* young and tender, and the work *is* great: for the palace *is* not for man, but for the LORD God.

Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for *things to be made of* gold, and the silver for *things of* silver, and the brass for *things of* brass, the iron for *things of* iron, and wood for *things of* wood; onyx stones, and *stones to be set*, glistening stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance.

Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, *which* I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house,

Even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses *withal*:

The gold for *things of* gold, and the silver for *things of* silver, and for all manner of work [to be made] by the hands of artificers. And who *then* is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?

Wow, Talk about preparation!!!

Verses 6-9:

Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered willingly [this is a great key],

And gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron.

And they with whom *precious* stones were found gave *them* to the treasure of the house of the LORD, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite.

Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly [because it came from their hearts they could rejoice], because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.

Oh how these priceless words of adoration gushed forth from his soul!

Verses 10-14:

Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed *be* thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and

ever.

Thine, O LORD, *is* the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all *that is* in the heaven and in the earth *is thine*; *thine is* the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.

Both riches and honour *come of* thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand *is* power and might; and in thine hand *it is* to make great, and to give strength unto all.

Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.

But who *am* I, and what *is* my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things *come of* thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

David recognized that all he was or ever would be was because of God. He knew so well that what ever he gave back to God was but a small portion of what God had given him. This is so true and yet too easily forgotten. We have what we have, we are what we are, ONLY because our wonderful God has favored us. If He doesn't give, we don't have. We are something because He has made us to be.

Verses 15-19:

For we *are* strangers before thee, and sojourners, as *were* all our fathers: our days on the earth *are* as a shadow, and *there is* none abiding.

O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name

cometh of thine hand, and *is* all thine own.

I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee.

O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee:

And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart [a wonderful request], to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all *these things*, and to build the palace, *for* the which I have made provision.

Every Christian should petition the Father for such a heart. The type of heart that exists to keep His Word. It's an honor to be obedient to His Word and we should view it as such.

Verses 20,21:

And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and the king.

And they sacrificed sacrifices unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings unto the LORD, on the morrow after that day, *even* a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, *and* a thousand

lambs, with their drink

A thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, a thousand lambs! How many turkeys, hams, etc. are you preparing?

Verses 22-25:

And did eat and drink before the LORD on that day with great gladness. And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed *him* unto the LORD *to be* the chief governor, and Zadok *to be* priest.

Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him.

And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king.

And the LORD magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him *such* royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.

David was, as the Scriptures testify, a man after God's own heart. I want a heart like David's. Don't you? Do you think he was tempted to play "catch-up?" Of course he was. In fact I know he played a similar game when tempted with anxiety.

Psalms 16:7-11

I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

I have set the LORD always before me: because *he is* at my

right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

You see, one of the great things that sustained David was the Hope. His hope was not unlike ours. He was waiting for Jesus Christ. So are we. David looked forward to the Lord's birth (the first coming) while we look forward to the Lord's Return (the second coming). David eagerly anticipated the coming Messiah because hope anticipates. We look to the Lord's Return with GREAT anticipation. We know it will happen we just don't know when. When I think about Jesus Christ returning in my lifetime the demands of life seem rather insignificant. Playing "catch-up" is not all that important. Like David I can play a better game.

Hope for Christ's Return is like a bottle of ketchup. We need to play "ketchup." (I know I need to explain that one or you'll think I've lost it for sure.) You take that bottle of ketchup and you hold it over your hamburger (or whatever) and it sometimes seems slow to come out. You know it's coming out, but doggone it, you're just not sure when. Perhaps you remember the ketchup commercial with the song "Anticipation" playing in the background. Yup, the ketchup is coming out! I simply don't know when. Now if you doubt that the ketchup is in fact going to come out I

offer a little challenge. Put on your Sunday best and I'll hold that same bottle of ketchup (which you doubted previously) over your head. Or if you like you can sit on YOUR couch in YOUR living room (not mine). Maybe you prefer your new car. Yes, your appreciation for the anticipated arrival of the ketchup will reach new heights. So it is with the Return. If you place the Hope before your heart, hold it there, your anticipation for Jesus Christ's arrival will reach new heights. Life will take on new meaning. You will be the embodiment of all that it means to be thankful. Your life will be a testimony of thanksgiving. Every day can and should be lived this way. When things get hectic and the demands upon your life increase, remember, God's Son is coming back! Today we are one day closer to, "forever being with the Lord."

Why play "catch-up" when you can play *KETCHUP*?

The Counselor's Corner

With Rev. Linus A. Mathis III

"The Greatest Gift Of All"

This is a time of year, for many of us, when our thoughts are turned to gifts and giving. If you're like me, every year you vow to get your Christmas shopping done early. However, for some reason, this never seems to happen. My wife and I have done one thing though. That is, we only buy gifts for children. Consequently, our list has become more manageable and enjoyable. This concept has been embraced by our relatives so the only problems that linger are getting the adults to admit their age.

Now our biggest dilemma is selecting that which is appropriate for each child. Age must be taken into consideration as well as gender. The child's parents are also major factors in this process. Perhaps you've not considered this before but it's important. Has anyone ever given your energy intensive child a drum set? Or a baby doll that wails when you approach it? I love the motion sensing noisy toys best, how about you? Most of us have been either recipient or donor at one time, thus motivating the *pay-back* gift. Have you ever been there or done that?

There's something else for us to contemplate in these matters. And that's the values and beliefs of the child's parents. This will greatly affect what they feel constitutes an acceptable toy. For instance, some folks are opposed to toy guns. I was reminded of this by my wonderful wife in a conversation we recently had regarding what to buy her cousin's boy. She informed me that her cousin's views on hunting and outdoor activities were dissimilar to mine. Bless her heart, she even used felicitous jargon to describe her cousin's viewpoint. That communicated to me, giving me more insight on my gift giving. Most of the toys I dismiss are those which introduce ungodly themes and lead the child into devilish doctrine and role playing. That usually wipes out a huge number of them and I'm left to choose from dolls, trucks, crafts and so forth. Gift giving seems innocuous enough but can lead to unhappiness and strife for the recipient if we aren't thoughtful and considerate. Therefore, the issues held in esteem by the child's parent are VERY important.

We Christians love to give gifts

which demonstrate our faith. But, sad though true, not everyone that we give a gift to is a Christian. Even a dear relative may not be Christian. And if you are a Christian in a situation like that, you know how bad you want them to be. And so, even in gift giving, you witness. Which is great but it doesn't always work. Sometimes our zeal out runs our wisdom. Well, I've got the solution! The one thing we can give that is always in season, needed by all, easily entreated, profitable, a blessing to God and not "issue sensitive," is love. Love is always the answer folks.

I Corinthians 13:4-8a

Charity [love] suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity [love] envieth not; charity [love] vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Beareth [covers over with silence, keeps secret, doesn't "blab" about others] all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity [love] never faileth: . . .

The love of God MUST be our prime consideration in EVERYTHING we do! If it's not loving, don't do it. Or in this case, buy it. How can buying a gift for someone be unloving? If it's something you want but they don't, that's how. We especially don't want to force Jesus Christ on anyone. They must receive by their own free-will decision. "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion

still."

Romans 2:4

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness [gentleness, kindness, it's pleasant and mild] of God leadeth thee to repentance?

He never forces Himself on us! This holiday season please consider the following before you buy, say or do anything:

- 1) Is it loving?
- 2) Is it kind?
- 3) Is it unselfish?
- 4) Is it true?
- 5) Is it the Word of God?

Since everything gives off something, you might also consider (time permitting) making your holiday gifts. If you make them with love they will give off love. That which we buy may not be made with love as the main ingredient.

The greatest gift is LOVE!

John 3:16

"The Turning Point Of His-Story"

It's hard to believe but we are in the final days of 1998. Yet another year has dashed by. Where does the time go? It seems the older I get, the faster it goes. I was once told that the reason for that is because all things are relative. A two year old sees a year as a very long time because it represents half of his entire life.

While a fifty year old, well you get the idea! I'm reminded of the late great Tennessee Ernie Ford singing, "You load sixteen tons and what do you get? Another day older and deeper in debt. Saint Peter don't you call me cause I can't go, I owe my soul to the company store."

I hope you don't owe your *soul* to the company store but deepening debt and the holidays do seem to go hand in hand. Don't they? I mentioned how fleeting last year seemed but have you considered the last one thousand nine hundred and ninety eight? Someone has! It has been that long (I'm well aware of calendar discrepancies so we'll approximate) since man has been given the reason to celebrate in this fashion. But we are missing the boat or something. Celebration and debt seem to be to be mutually exclusive. Don't they?

Somehow, I don't think that the original intent was to celebrate this joyous time of year by increasing retail sales or our credit card debt. Yet, that's exactly what this time of year represents for far too many folks. Barely over last December's debt and ready to begin the "cycle" all over again. What's wrong with this picture? If that's a reason to be merry then I'm disconnected from reality.

Something big happened about two thousand years ago that has forever changed mankind and history. Whether you are Christian or not you are affected. Like it or not, ALL history is reckoned by this one single event. Men may argue, as most Bible scholars do, as to the exact time and date but one thing is undeniable, it happened! A child was born. That child was Christ the Lord and we will never be the same again. All

history must bow and take back seat to this one sovereign event. The course of all human events have been forever altered.

No matter what you believe, the message is clear. Hope has been born. We should be saved from our enemies and delivered from the hand of those who hate us. The knowledge of salvation has been made known through the tender mercies of God and the dayspring from on high has visited us. Why? To give light to all those who sit in darkness under the shadow of death and guide our feet in the way of peace.

How sad that folks are so stressed this time of year! The exact opposite should be true for all of us.

When I was a child this time of year was very exciting to me. The night before Christmas was a sleepless one and I was up at the "hint" of dawn's first light. There was something special in the air. Perhaps we should all go back to being children, but as I recall, even the adults were excited back then. Either that or they hid their stress very well. But I don't think so. I think that we have become too advanced to appreciate just how extraordinary this time of year really is. Our modern world with all its conveniences and technology doesn't seem to have time for things which are, shall we say, "ethereal." Oh no, we've become far too educated and materialistic for that. We certainly have made some remarkable breakthroughs in electronics and such. But at what cost? I'd rather go back to a simpler time, when "intangibles" were more valuable. When hope brightened a man's soul. When men and women revered that which they could not see. When December was a month of

enthusiastic believing for everyone and love for mankind was premier. A time when increased debt due to holiday compulsion had not yet been born. A time when the birth of a child was most important. A time when love was liege for a Son was sent that the world should be saved.

Do you remember that time?

Luke 2:14

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

It's not too late to remember!

God bless us all, each and every one!

And yes, He already has!

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