

Thanksgiving (U.S.A.)

MORE THAN ENOUGH

Deuteronomy 8:7-18

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Analysis by Paige G. Evers

7 For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, 8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, 9 a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. 10 You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you. 11 Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. 12 When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, 13 and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, 14 then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, 15 who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid waste-land with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, 16 and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good. 17 Do not say to yourself, "My power and the might of my own hand have gained me this wealth." 18 But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your

ancestors, as he is doing today.

DIAGNOSIS: Giving Thanks to the Wrong Gods

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : Thanks Be To Me

Picture a dining room in Anytown, U.S.A., on Thanksgiving Day 2008. The patriarch or matriarch sits at the head of the Thanksgiving table, surveying the feast. It's easy to imagine two possible scenarios. Scene 1: The patriarch looks around with satisfaction and pride. I earned this! Despite the rollercoaster of an economy, we're doing well. Look at all I've worked for! Look at all I've done! What a great day to celebrate and give thanks for my efforts out there in the marketplace. Another possibility, Scene 2: The matriarch looks around the dining room, looks at the food, looks at her family with gloominess and despair. What have I to be thankful for this year? The economy is terrible. We're having to cut back. I can't do my usual Black Friday shopping tomorrow. I just should have skipped Thanksgiving altogether.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : God Who?

In both scenes, God has been forgotten, which is the very thing this text from Deuteronomy warns us against (v. 11). In Scene 1, the heart trusts the self. It exalts the self (v. 14) and forgets that God is the one who provides everything as a gift from his generous hand. In Scene 2, the heart trusts money and the shopping mall. When the market is up and the shopping is good, the heart soars. When the market is down, the heart despairs. What does God have to do with it?

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : The Lord YOUR God, That's Who

But God will not stand to be forgotten. Within the boundaries of our text, God's words don't seem overly threatening, with the

commands, “Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God” (v. 11) and “remember the Lord your God” (v. 18). But these are more than gentle requests. Immediately after the lesson ends, God spells out the consequences for turning away from him and following after other gods, such as self (Scene 1) or wealth (Scene 2). God declares, “If you do forget the Lord your God and follow other gods to serve and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish” (v. 19). Those other gods may entice and satisfy for a time. But they are the ones that will be forgotten when God unleashes his wrath on sinners who have turned away from the Lord their God.

PROGNOSIS: A New Start with the One True God

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : A New Covenant

The only thing that can put a stop to that death sentence is God acting in a new way to save his people from their sin. Despite God’s repeated instructions “to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes” (v. 11), they can’t do it. Something new is needed. Just as God acted in new ways to bring the Israelites out of the land of Egypt (v. 14), feed them manna in the wilderness (v. 16), and give them wealth in order to confirm his covenant with their ancestors (v. 18), God acts once again to save them from his wrath. He makes a new covenant with his people in his Son, Jesus, whose death and resurrection save sinners from perishing and give them a new start with God. And while the abundance of the earth may cease, Jesus is living water and manna that lasts—forgiveness and peace with God flowing from the Son’s gracious hands.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : Thanks Be To God

Back to the Anytown, U.S.A. dining room. Now the patriarch in Scene 1 has a new heart with which to survey his abundant table. His heart overflows with thankfulness. He recognizes that the

Lord his God has made it all possible. Just as the Lord brought the Israelites into a “good land, a land with flowing streams” (v. 7), the Lord has given him the gift of a good job, a steady income, and a Sabbath day to enjoy his blessings. But, best of all, he has come to see that whether there is plenty or want, God remains faithful in Christ. Now the matriarch in Scene 2 also has a new heart and a new outlook on her situation. Sure, the economic reality may be different than last year, but there is enough. Just as the Lord gave the Israelites “a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing” (v. 9), the Lord has given her enough. More than enough in Christ, and she is thankful.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *A Living Thanksgiving*

Eventually, after getting up from the Thanksgiving table, the man from Scene 1 and the woman from Scene 2 can leave the dining room. They can go out into the neighborhood, back to work, and wherever God calls them to share the blessings that come from his generous hand. They might not have wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, olive trees, and honey (v. 8) to share with their neighbors, co-workers and friends. But they have enough material blessings to share with some. What’s more, they have this life-giving news to share with all: in the death and resurrection of Jesus, God has declared that he forgives them. God loves them. And they can share that news with thankfulness and joy, not only on the fourth Thursday of November, but every day.