

*“Praise the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love endures forever”
Ps. 106:1 NIV*

The thing that kept the children of Israel going, pointing them in the right direction was praises of God such as this psalm to remind them of God’s gracious love and actions in their lives. This priority of praise and thanksgiving was natural for those who sought God when we read scripture. Perhaps it came from the sure knowledge of whom, at the end of the day was in charge of everything no matter what faced them in the future, or for that matter in the present.

In many ways we have lost how valuable the priority of praise and thanksgiving can have in our lives, even in the midst of great difficulty. Boston Globe Columnist Jeff Jacoby in an article written a few years back talked about the pilgrims who are parts of our thanksgiving tradition, and how their thanksgiving was amazing because of all the hardships and bad luck they had when they reached Massachusetts:

The crossing was very rough and the Mayflower was blown off course. Instead of reaching Virginia, where Englishmen had settled 13 years earlier, the Pilgrims ended up in the wilds of Massachusetts. By the time they found a place to make their new home - Plymouth, they called it - winter had set in. The storms were frightful. Shelter was rudimentary. There was little food. Within weeks, nearly all the settlers were sick.

"That which was most sad and lamentable," Governor William Bradford later recalled, "was that in two or three months' time, half of their company died, especially in January and February, being the depth of winter, and wanting houses and other comforts; being infected with the scurvy and other diseases.... There died sometimes two or three of a day."

When spring came, Indians showed them how to plant corn, but their first crops were dismal. Supplies ran out, but their sponsors in London refused to send more. The first time the Pilgrims sent a shipment of goods to England, it was stolen by pirates.

If you had been there in 1621 - if you had seen half your friends die, if you had suffered through famine, malnutrition, and sickness, if you had endured a year of heartbreak and tragedy - would you have felt grateful?

The answer is that they did. There is no question that for many of us this had been a hard year for many reasons. Some of us may not want to face what we may have to go through. But there is a way, one that the great cloud of witnesses testifies to, and encourages us here on earth. We as people of faith believe in a God who is in charge of this world.

The Bible says at the beginning under God all was good, and at the end in Revelation under God all will be good for God’s people.

May we, the best that we are able looking to the future with eyes open and ready to go forward proclaim with the psalmist:

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Have a blessed thanksgiving!

Pr. John Van Haneghan