



# St. Stephen's Traditional Episcopal Church

11856 Mays Chapel Rd., Timonium, MD 21093

Thanksgiving Day, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son  
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠**

It would seem decidedly odd to plan a lavish birthday party or testimonial dinner and then deliberately fail to invite to the feast the person whose personhood, gifts or talents were being celebrated. It wouldn't simply be bad manners – though it certainly would be that – it would also be utterly stupid. If the guest of honor to be deliberately excluded, it would make the celebration entirely pointless.

Yet today that is exactly the way many Americans – perhaps most Americans – treat Thanksgiving. The whole *raison d'être* for Thanksgiving is to give thanks to God for the bountiful gifts he has showered upon us. It is why the first settlers in Virginia, Maryland and Massachusetts initiated the celebration. And it is the reason why President George Washington proclaimed it.

Yet today God is far from the central focus of Thanksgiving Day. Indeed, he comes far behind turkey, pumpkin pie and football. Thanksgiving, in fact, has become more a celebration of the family than a celebration of God's gifts at the harvest.

This is by no means all bad. Thanksgiving is a time when all families, no matter how fractured and fractious, make an extra special effort to get on. It is a time when the

most selfish of spouses and hapless of homemakers do their best to make up for the other 364 days of abject failure. It's a time of togetherness, if not in front of a flickering fire then a flickering TV screen.

Even in the countryside, Thanksgiving celebrations in the traditional manner are rapidly vanishing. We live in an age of factory farming. Technology is king. We plant two or three crops and grow 'em by hundreds of acres. Farm kids are raised on the same pre-packaged, homogenized diets as their town dwelling counterparts, and they probably wouldn't even recognize their foodstuffs in their natural state.

But the fact of the matter is that we are not a whit less dependent on God's grace for what the prayer book calls "the returns of the fruits of the earth" than we were 350 years ago. The fact that most of us can't tell the difference between a field of wheat, barley, rye or linseed doesn't make the grain harvest any less important.

Modern pesticides and fertilizers have vastly increased our farmers' yields, and the enormous advances in food preservation and refrigeration technologies in recent years have enormously improved our storage and distribution capabilities. But this does not

diminish the importance of God's role in the process.

There are so many more mouths to feed than there were half a century ago, famine would have been endemic had God not inspired within us powers of invention. Indeed, back in the late 1970, long before global warming had become the *crise de jour* – even before its predecessor: the threat of “nuclear winter – doomsayer Paul Ehrlich wrote a book called “The Population Bomb” in which he prophesied widespread and catastrophic famines starting in the mid-1970s.

Ehrlich, however, reckoned without our fast developing agricultural technologies – including genetic engineering. Our God-given resourcefulness has not only granted us an abundant food supply, it has enabled us to come to the rescue of those many parts of the world where hunger was once endemic. That is a very real reason for us – and the rest of the world – to give him thanks.

But our God-given cleverness has proved a bane as well as a blessing. It is often develops into an infatuation with our own intellects that keeps us from developing any meaningful relationship with our maker. We ascribe to ourselves the credit for our ability to grow larger and less flavorful vegetables than our forebears, quite oblivious of the fact that cultivation and creation are horses of entirely different colors.

It is in this light that we should consider today's gospel. In it, Jesus explains that if we say we believe in God, we ought to act like it. If we believe, for example, that he

really is the almighty, all-seeing, all-loving creator of all things then we ought to trust him to care for us and act in our best interests.

He is urging us cultivate a childlike faith. The word "childlike" is not be confused with the word "childish." There's nothing childish about a childlike faith. Nothing could be more mature. After all, Jesus says: "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

Children, for example, have no difficulty with the concept of miracles. Children instinctively grasp that, for God, doing a miracle is simply a piece of cake. Adults, by contrast, distract themselves with pointless questions that have no bearing on the real issue. Rather than ponder ***WHY*** God performs a particular miracle, we try to figure out the unimportant technicalities concerning ***HOW*** he performs it.

Kids go directly to the heart of the matter – to the "Why?" not to the "How?" And they have no difficulty accepting that the unsophisticated but entirely correct answer is: "Because God loves us." Knowing the right answer is very important. For until we can accept God's love, we will find it impossible show him the gratitude we owe him. Indeed, it is the acceptance of his love that puts the “thanks” in Thanksgiving. *AMEN.*

***To the Only Wise God, Our Saviour, be  
Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power,  
Both Now and Forever. AMEN.***