

# Empire Church of the Brethren

## Sunday Service Sermons

**23 November 2025**

Giving Thanks to God

Text: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"

Good question!

And the answer is?

One word, ALL!

If you cannot out give God then give him all and he will give you all.

Sounds good to me.

The day we are about to celebrate is a unique American tradition.

It began over four hundred years ago as grateful Pilgrims gave thanks for a modest harvest on a twenty-acre plot that promised to carry them through another hard winter.

We should have hit the shore in Florida, it would have been much easier.

For over a century our nation has observed this festive day by presidential decree.

Which makes it a National Holiday.

Thanksgiving Day is a distinctively religious observance.

It was set aside as a day of prayer and praise.

In 1863 President Lincoln set aside the last Thursday in November "as a day of Thanksgiving and praise for our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens."

Reinhold Niebuhr has expressed concern that our Thanksgiving Day emphasis has departed from this religious purpose.

He stated, "The Thanksgiving proclamations of the American presidents for the last two decades have increasingly departed from the original rather purely religious spirit of Thanksgiving and they have increasingly become congratulations to God for having such wonderful children in America."

Thanksgiving Day is not set aside that we might concentrate all our gratitude within the day and take God's gifts for granted the rest of the year.

Someone has suggested that we change Thanksgiving Day into a day of grumbling and complaint and spend the other 364 days of the year in thanksgiving.

Benjamin Franklin recalled a childhood experience that brought a sharp rebuke from his father.

An old pork barrel was situated near the table from which the father would daily draw meat for the day's need.

Then his father would always pray the prayer, "We thank Thee, Father, for the meat You have set before us."

One day young Ben suggested: "Father, why not say one prayer over the whole barrel and get it done with? Then we won't have to thank the Lord every meal for every piece of meat we eat."

Isn't this often what we do today?

Never has a generation been so blessed with material comforts and possessions as in our day.

The late Dr. Gossip told of a message he brought at a meeting in a small coal-mining town in Scotland.

While he was speaking, a note was handed to the chairman.

He glanced at it, looked over the crowd, and passed it down the line.

Dr. Gossip said he could feel the sudden, ominous, tense stillness, the unanimous agony of suspense, the holding of breath, the quickening of the heartbeats of the whole group as the terrifying note made its way nearer to the woman to whom it was directed.

Her face was white as she received it.

Every eye was upon her.  
She opened it, read it, and smiled.  
Instantly everyone relaxed.  
Dr. Gossip commented, "For always, always, they live with the terror of injury and death for their loved ones brooding over them, that we might have coal."  
We flip a switch on our wall and expect light.  
We forget the lineman who keep the electricity flowing.  
We are unmoved when we read of the electrocution of a worker atop a pole.  
We turn on the faucet in our kitchen and water flows.  
In the book. Wind, Sand, and Stars, written by a pilot of the French Sahara line during World War II, we read of three Moors from the desert who had never seen a tree, a rose, or a flowing river in their native land.  
After the War they were guests in Europe.  
They were shown a waterfall in the French Alps.  
Now, to them, water was worth its weight in gold.  
This extravagance was overwhelming.  
The guide was ready to move on, but they insisted on waiting, "Why" he asked. Their amazing reply was, "We are waiting for the falls to come to an end."  
It was simply beyond their comprehension that God should so madly supply water.  
This water had been running ceaselessly for thousands of years.  
When they returned to their homeland they said very little about the waterfalls.  
No one would believe them anyway.  
The psalmist, in a time when his heart sang in praise in an awareness of God's gracious gifts, asked himself, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"  
He answered with three responses.  
I will take the cup of salvation.  
This is the first step.  
The greatest gift of God to humanity is the gift of his Son.  
"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."  
We cannot sincerely say, "God, we thank you for sending your Son to die for our sins," and not accept that Son as our own Savior.  
To reject God's Son and his claims on our life is to say, "So far as I am concerned, he might as well not have come to the earth."  
The first response of gratitude is to "take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord."

What a blessed promise is the declaration, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

I will pay my vows.

"I will pay them," the psalmist suggests, "in the presence of all people."

These are public vows.

They begin with a public profession of faith.

We declare our allegiance to Christ and his church.

Like the public vows of marriage made by two people deeply in love, the public vows of the Christian put us on record and under obligation to be consistent and faithful to our vows to Christ and his church.

Think back on all the vows you have made since that first one.

Think of the high, emotional experience when that baby was born and you held in your arms a life of your own flesh.

Think of that revival meeting, that camp experience, that time of great sorrow or great joy when God was so close and you vowed to love him more devotedly and to follow his will.

Thanksgiving Day is a wonderful time to pay our vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

I will assume the role of the servant.

"O Lord, truly I am your servant," the psalmist writes.

When we assume the role of servant, we are most like our Lord.

The word minister means "servant."

The New Testament declares that all Christians are called to be "ministers," "servants," in the sense that we are to be concerned with ministering to the needs of others rather than being concerned with being served by others.

Jesus said of his coming, "The Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister."

Let us follow his example.

Let us translate our "thanksgiving" into "thanksgiving."

When Jesus addressed Peter with the question, "Do you love me?"

He followed Peter's declaration with the words, "Feed my sheep."

In other words, if you love, do something about it!

Thanksgiving must not be mere words.

The Pharisee started his prayer with the words, "God I thank you," but followed those words with a gifted, self-centered eulogy about his own self-righteousness.

How does God know we love him?

By our doing something about it.

This begins with receiving his blessed Son as our Savior.

Then continuing the work of Jesus as he guides us to do so.

Then the Kingdom of God will be here like it is there.