

Thanksgiving Eve – 2014 – Hebrews 13:5-6

This is new to me. Have you heard how today – Thanksgiving Eve – is now called “Black Wednesday”? This isn’t a reference that “Black Friday” sales at the stores have crept all the way from the old standard of Friday 12:00:01am, into Thanksgiving evening hours, now to swallow up Thanksgiving Day whole. (Although I think some online sites have “virtually” done that by offering their Black Friday sales already.) Black Wednesday doesn’t have its roots in any marketing, actually. It is something that has occurred “organically” over the past several years. People who live far from home are suddenly back in reach of family and friends whom they haven’t seen in a long time. They want to get together. No one wants to host and cook for everyone the night before Thanksgiving, since you’re going to be hosting and cooking for a mess of people on Thanksgiving. So the natural is to meet up somewhere, like a restaurant or a bar. It’s become a huge day for sales at such businesses.

I have to admit. I was ready to kind of “go off” on the whole movement. The first mention I caught of Black Wednesday was very “dark” in nature: it glorified it as a heavy-drinking-kind-of-night. We know the dangers that pile up along with the sin of drunkenness. But not all “Black Wednesday” gathering is like that. There is, it seems, a redeeming quality. Many family and friends simply use it as an opportunity to reconnect.

I wonder if any of you have felt, like me, a little “edginess” over what we see in these days leading up to Thanksgiving. You hear bantered around the topic: What’s happening to Thanksgiving? Christmas decorations are up in the restaurants and stores all the way back in October. Are people jettisoning Thanksgiving altogether?

Take a step back from that question. Take a deep breath maybe, if you’re a little worked up. And then, – are you calmed down? –, maybe first we should ask this question: Did they ever have it in the first place? Thanksgiving, that is.

I’m talking about true thanksgiving. To offer true thanksgiving, one must be directing the thanks *to the One* who deserves the credit for all the good things. “Everything that does not come from faith is sin” – Romans 14:23. Those without faith in Jesus have never known, have never given, true thanks. When I step back to see things this way, my heart is softened. I’m not so ready-to-go-off on others. In fact, I have a heart that goes out to those who don’t yet know the real reason to give thanks.

Actually, we – Christians – are the only ones in danger of losing thanksgiving.

The opening lines of Hebrews 13:5 present a very real temptation. Here, what do you see? →→→ →→→ →→→



The new self in you is content (the attitude). But there’s a part of each one of us that is never satisfied with the content (what kind of stuff or how much stuff) God has given us.

These eyes are attached to a heart where the sinful self still claws and scrapes in an effort to gain control. The sinful self is never content to let “good things” just be “good things,” and is always trying to turn them into “god-things.” Money is a good thing. But love of it? That is the sinful self convincing us to put it into a “god thing” place. God deserves my love, trust and thanks. Money isn’t the only popular target of the sinful self. You name the good things in your life, and see how often the sinful self attempts to turn them into a “god thing”: relationships, achievement or success, the use of our time.

The Lord gives us the cure for our sins of failing to appreciate Him, failing to thank Him, failing to prioritize Him. He also fills us with the Gospel promises that fix our sights on our God and his goodness, that renew our hearts to be content with whatever he gives us, that set our souls at rest.

What does the Lord give us? *First and foremost Himself.*

Look at his promise to you closely, dear Christian: There's never a place in which the Lord is not present with you – for you. Never a situation so devoid of hope that he will abandon you and leave you helpless. Never a time so dark, that the ever-present Lord is not there (your unseen companion). Never can it be said: he was absent – he was a no show – he must have had somewhere else to be. He has proven his perfect track record at taking care of you, dear Christian.

He took care of our greatest need. Jesus snatched us from the jaws of Hell.

Knowing our failures, admitting our sins, we daily rely on the promise: “Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you.”

There is only one time God ever left His child. If you're scratching your head at that statement, let me clarify: God the Father forsook His Son. Jesus suffered hell on Calvary's hill – suffered it there in the place of you and me.

Dear child of God through faith, you will be with God for all eternity. You are assured right now that he is with you every moment, in every joy that you experience, and in every unique challenge.

Content to be forgiven. Content as God's child. Content in God's grace. You understand you have every good reason to give thanks. May the Lord strengthen us never to lose such thanks!

Read Hebrews 13:5-6 *5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." 6 So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*