

Church of God Sunday School

THANKSGIVING

During the time of the Thanksgiving season, our minds turn to those people who came to America seeking religious freedom from the Church of England. They wanted to worship God in what they felt was the true Bible way. These people felt so strongly about this that they were willing to cross the ocean at great risk to their lives. God honored their faith and what they were trying to do with what light they had.

On September 6, 1620, the *Mayflower*, packed with 102 passengers (besides the crew), started out for America. Sixty-four days and 2,750 miles later, on November 11, 1620, they sighted land near Cape Cod. They had landed at the wrong place, so they turned south to head for the Hudson River. It was not until December 16, 1620, that the ship finally came to land at Plymouth Harbor. There the Forefathers (we know them as the Pilgrims) began to build new houses.

Of the 102 Pilgrims who started out on the journey, only one had died on the trip. But the first winter the Pilgrims spent in America was an extremely hard one. By the spring of 1621, exposure, malnutrition, and sickness had reduced that number to about half. Those who were left were still determined to stay in this land and make it a land of religious freedom for their children.

An Indian named Squanto befriended the Pilgrims and taught them how to raise certain crops. God enabled them to have a harvest in the fall of 1621. That first harvest was celebrated with much thanksgiving to God for His care. Thankful people with thankful hearts prepared a bountiful feast that included wheat, peas, barley, Indian corn, venison, fish, and wild turkey.

There was not one national day for thanksgiving until 1863; then Abraham Lincoln made Thanksgiving a national holiday. Thanksgiving truly is an American observance, an American holiday, but it is more than that. Giving thanks is much more than having good manners, saying a prayer before our meals, or celebrating a national holiday by seeing how much turkey we can eat.

Thanksgiving is a Bible command. First Thessalonians 5:18 says that we are to give thanks to God in everything. Psalm 100:4 says, "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful

unto him, and bless his name." Colossians 3:15 says, "Be ye thankful." Many other Scriptures tell us to be thankful.

Why should we be thankful to God? "For in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Our very existence comes from God. We are God's offspring, His children. He is our Heavenly Father. The basic needs for our bodies are supplied by God, directly or indirectly: food, water, air, shelter, clothing.

And not only that, but God has allowed us to have a wonderful gift for our souls—the gift of salvation.

Through Jesus' death on the Cross, we can be saved and made free from the power of sin if we meet God's conditions. What are the conditions? To want to be forgiven of our sins, to pray to Jesus, to actually ask Him to forgive us, and then to believe that He will forgive us. When Jesus sees that we are really sorry, He will come into our hearts, bringing His gift; then we should always be thankful for it or we might lose it.

The gift of salvation is what makes a person a Christian, a part of God's church. The Church of God should give thanks for the many prophets who

suffered terrible persecutions to further God's truth. New Testament Israel fought the fight of faith to pass on the Christian inheritance. The early church took the torch of truth and lit this dark world with the message of the new covenant of salvation through Jesus Christ.

When a falling away from truth brought the Dark Ages, God still had a people who remained faithful to Him and carried the truth forth. The martyrs shed their own blood, enduring the hardships they met with because they loved the Word of God and wanted to obey it. Yes, they had cruel trials to endure; but oh, how they stood the tests!

Christians today should be thankful for the many reformers, such as Martin Luther, who brought to light the fundamental truths that had been lost or isolated during those years. God's Word was lived out in people's lives, and the truth shone forth again.

As late as this century, we can still worship the God of Heaven in truth. The freedom, the prosperity, and the privileges that our nation still enjoys have come about because there have been men and women who have loved



God enough to worship Him in truth and to put Him first in their lives.

The cost of freedom to worship God in truth is still great. We need godly leaders. God is looking for men and

women, for boys and girls with the desire to live for Jesus and to put Him first in their lives. God wants them to help spread the Gospel. Will you be one of them?

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**MEMORY VERSE:** *"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God . . ."* —1 Thessalonians 5:18  
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Thanksgiving Street

I knew a man whose name was Horner
Who used to live on Grumble Corner;
Grumble Corner in Crosspatch Town,
And he never was seen without a frown.

He grumbled at this, and he grumbled at that.
He growled at the dog. He growled at the cat.
He grumbled at morning. He grumbled at night,
And to grumble and growl was his chief delight.

He grumbled so much at his wife that she
Began to grumble, as well as he.
And all the children, wherever they went,
Reflected their parents' discontent.

If the sky was dark and betokened rain,
Then Mr. Horner was sure to complain.
And if there was not a cloud about,
He grumbled because of a threatened drought.

His meals were never to suit his taste—
He grumbled at having to eat in haste.
The bread was poor, or the meat was tough—
Or else, he hadn't had half enough.

No matter how hard his wife would try
To please her husband, with scornful eye
He'd look around, and then with a scowl,
At something or other, he'd begin to growl.

One day as I walked down the street,
My old acquaintance I chanced to meet;
Whose face was without the look of care
And the ugly frown that had drifted there.

"I may be mistaken," perhaps, I said
As after saluting, I turned my head!
"But it is, and it isn't the Mr. Horner
Who used to live on Grumble Corner."

I met him next day, and I met him again;
In melting weather and in pelting rain,
When stocks were up and when stocks were down,
But a smile, somehow, had replaced the frown.

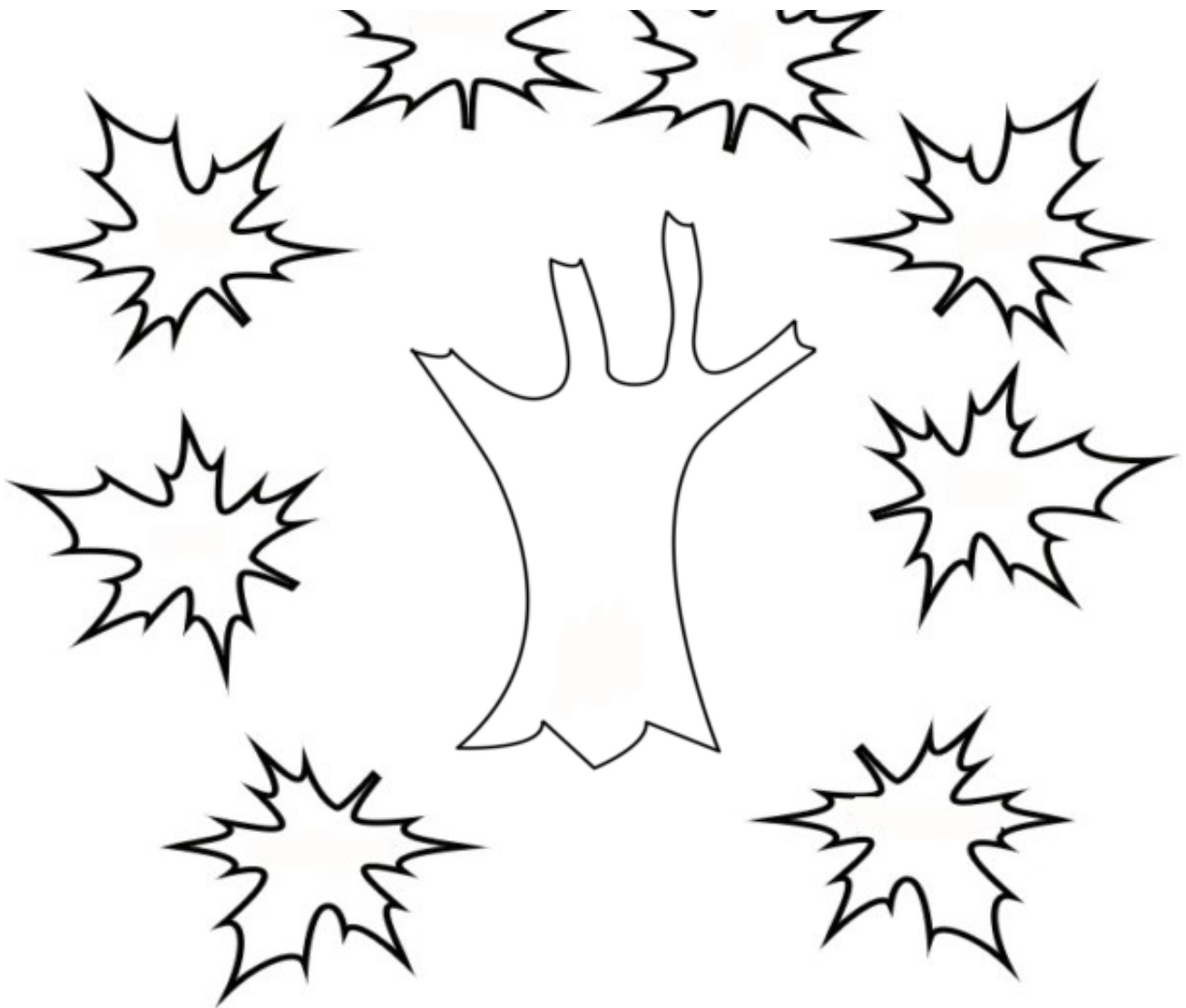
It puzzled me much, and so one day,
I seized his hand in a friendly way and said,
"Mr. Horner, I'd like to know
What can have happened to change you so?"

He laughed a laugh that was good to hear;
For it told of a conscience, calm and clear.
And he said with none of his old-time drawl,
"Why I've changed my residence, that is all.

"Yes," said Horner, "it wasn't healthy on
Grumble Corner.
And so I've moved: twas a change complete,
And you will find me now
On Thanksgiving Street."



What Are YOU Thankful For?



Write eight things that you are thankful for on the leaves around the tree.

Can you think of more than eight?



O Give thanks
unto the Lord.
Psalm 136:1