



## The Love of Thanksgiving

*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.* —1 Chronicles 16:34

*O Lord that lends me life, lend me a heart replete with thankfulness.*  
—William Shakespeare

**W**hy do we love the Thanksgiving season so much here in North America? Why do so many say that Thanksgiving Day is one of their favorite holidays of the year? Along with our friends in Canada, Thanksgiving Day, although celebrated on different dates, remains a highlight of the Fall season, and an important beginning to the spiritual richness of the holiday season to come. Along with a deep joy and a quiet peace we delight in during this season, there is a true **Love to Thanksgiving**.

The Thanksgiving season is a time when we may fall in love all over again. We may fall in love again with our shared lives together in Christ Jesus. We may fall in love again with his boundless grace, and with all the special people, favorite places and countless blessings and gifts we receive within his grace. It's not just a matter of perspective. It's a matter of honest emotion. As we focus on all that we are truly thankful for, spiritually and physically, our hearts feel, deeply feel, the **Love of Thanksgiving**.

*My heart is overflowing with love for you, and as I reflect on my blessings this Thanksgiving season, I realize that you are Blessing Number One.*— Henry Ward Beecher

Henry Ward Beecher was a nineteenth-century American clergyman, social reformer, author and speaker. In his many sermons and writings, Henry Ward Beecher was famous for emphasizing the reality of God's love in the lives of believers. When I read his words, there can be only one true addressee—**our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus**.

As Christ-followers, we all share the same **Blessing Number One**. We may indeed enumerate and enjoy blessings “number two through two million” quite differently, but to be sure, **Blessing Number One** we hold in common.

And, what is **Blessing Number One**? Our lives have been redeemed, transformed, and re-purposed as a result of coming to know the saving work of Christ Jesus. In his boundless grace and enduring love, we now live as new men and new women. We live with hearts replete, or filled, with thankfulness; our hearts are overflowing with Love.

We love him because he first loved us. Christ Jesus showed us the way to true love. We have learned of true love from him. If our hearts are over-flowing with love for him, that love is a mirror of his love for us. We are his beloved, and as such, the quiet peace and deep joy we feel comes from knowing his love for us, and for all the world. We rejoice and rest in him.

*Count your many blessings, name them one-by-one, and it will surprise you, what the Lord has done* states the classic Christian hymn composed by Johnson Oatman. *Count your many blessings, name*

*them one-by-one*—beginning with our **first and most important blessing**. This counting is central to Thanksgiving Day. *And it will surprise you, what the Lord has done*—within that surprise, within that honest emotion, our hearts are filled with a thankfulness and overflowing love. His boundless grace and enduring love overwhelm us.

We love Thanksgiving because it's a time to focus on what the Lord has done in our lives. That focus is on the spiritual richness of his boundless grace and enduring love. We love Thanksgiving because we *count our many blessings, naming them one-by-one*. That focus is on the physical blessings and gifts we've been given by his grace. Those physical gifts—including the wonderful food, the warmth of family and the excitement of the Fall festivities—make Thanksgiving Day a favorite. The deep joy, quiet peace, and true Love of Thanksgiving holds both physical and spiritual components. As a result, our hearts are filled with thankfulness.

We rejoice and rest in the reality that Christ Jesus is our Lord, and he is filled with goodness. **Jesus is the Love of Thanksgiving**. His love endures forever and his grace is boundless. **He is our Blessing Number One**.

As we focus on Thanksgiving Day, we celebrate the good news of his birth, life, death and resurrection. We celebrate his transforming work being done within us. And, we celebrate his love, in us and through us, to all the world. In this, we give thanks to the Lord. □

—Ed Dunn