

Thanksgiving

20. I
11/20/46

Text: Matthew 13:24-30

Before entering into a discussion of our text let's first consider the words of the psalmist in the 100th. psalm which I have already read for our scripture lesson. This famous verse of praise is certainly one of the most widely read and quoted of all the psalms, probably ranking next to the 23rd. psalm itself. But that which interests us most about this psalm today is that it is a psalm of Thanksgiving.

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord, He is God; It is he that hath made us, and we are His; We are His people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving." Thus the psalmist demands outward expression of our thanks to the Lord for all his blessings. Not only must we be thankful within ourselves but we must tell others about it, we must thank the Lord in prayer, we must praise him in song. Psychologists tell us that it is dangerous to repress ones feelings. If a man represses his urge to express publicly his love for God and his thankfulness to Him because he is afraid of criticism from his friends, or acquaintances, then he is dishonest to himself as well as to others. The feelings within him that he must not give expression to those things which he thanks heaven for causes him to be grouchy towards those he comes in contact with. We all know that when we are prevented from doing something we would like to do that we tend to be unpleasant. And if we don't express ourselves there is a danger that we will be driven insane. Continuous worry or continuous joy which one feels that he can not tell to anyone can easily cause one to become unbalanced mentally, or, as we say, become insane or go crazy. So the psalmist wisely commands us in psalm 100 to praise the Lord.

In the parable of the sower which is our text this morning let us get the story well in mind. It starts off saying "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field". So first we will consider what we have sown during the last year. Then having done that, it is within the soul of each one of us as to whether we have reaped that which we have sown or whether God in His great mercy has given us more than we deserve. So first, let us consider what we have sown which we can take into account the many blessings we

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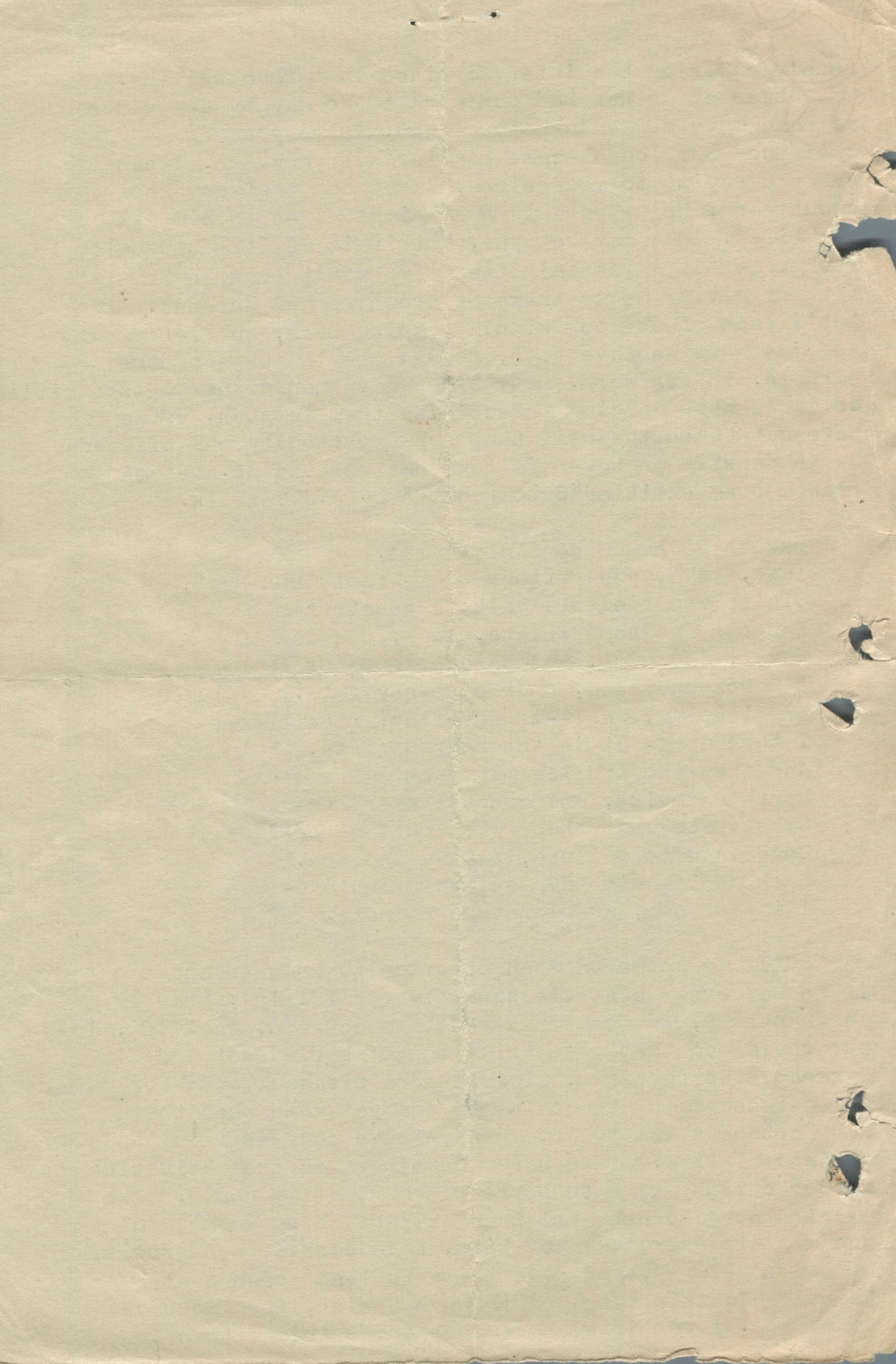
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received during the interval since last Thanksgiving.

Each of us has had our work to do day by day since we have been old enough to reason. As we grew from childhood our load became heavier everyday. Oh, I can see you saying to yourselves, "what can that boy know about work? He's probably had things given to him all his life". That may be true, but if it is I'm unusually lucky, and it is certain that life won't pass me by without giving me my share of troubles and burdens. Let's each of us look within, think back, and let's see just how we have sown, to use the language of the parable, in our work. Many of us have had no new opportunities, or if we have we didn't recognize them as such. If we have not taken the best that our opportunity has offered us we deserve whatever failure has come to us. Let me read a poem entitled "Opportunity" by J.J. Ingalls.

Master of Human destinies am I.
Fame, love, and fortune on my footsteps wait,
Cities and fields I walk; I penetrate
Deserts and seas remote, and, passing by
Hovel, and mart, and palace, soon or late
I knock unbidden, once at every gate!
If sleeping, wake--if feasting, rise before
I turn away. It is the hour of fate,
And they who follow me reach every state
Mortals desire, and conquer every foe
Save death; but those who doubt or hesitate,
Condemned to failure, penury and woe,
Seek me in vain and uselessly implore--
I answer not, and I return no more.

If we answered when opportunity knocked and if we met every obstacle squarely and fairly, bravely and honestly, the year has been a successful one. If, in our social contacts, we tried to be as pleasant and agreeable as possible, always had a pleasant word for our neighbors and those we met and yet knew when to say "no" and stick to it, then we have done well in our social life. If we have taken part in the activities of our church, have supported it as best we could, have carried our goodness which we are apt to show only on Sunday into every walk of life, have carried our problems to God in prayer, and have tried to lead someone else to companionship with God through Christ, then we have done well. I say if we have done these things then we

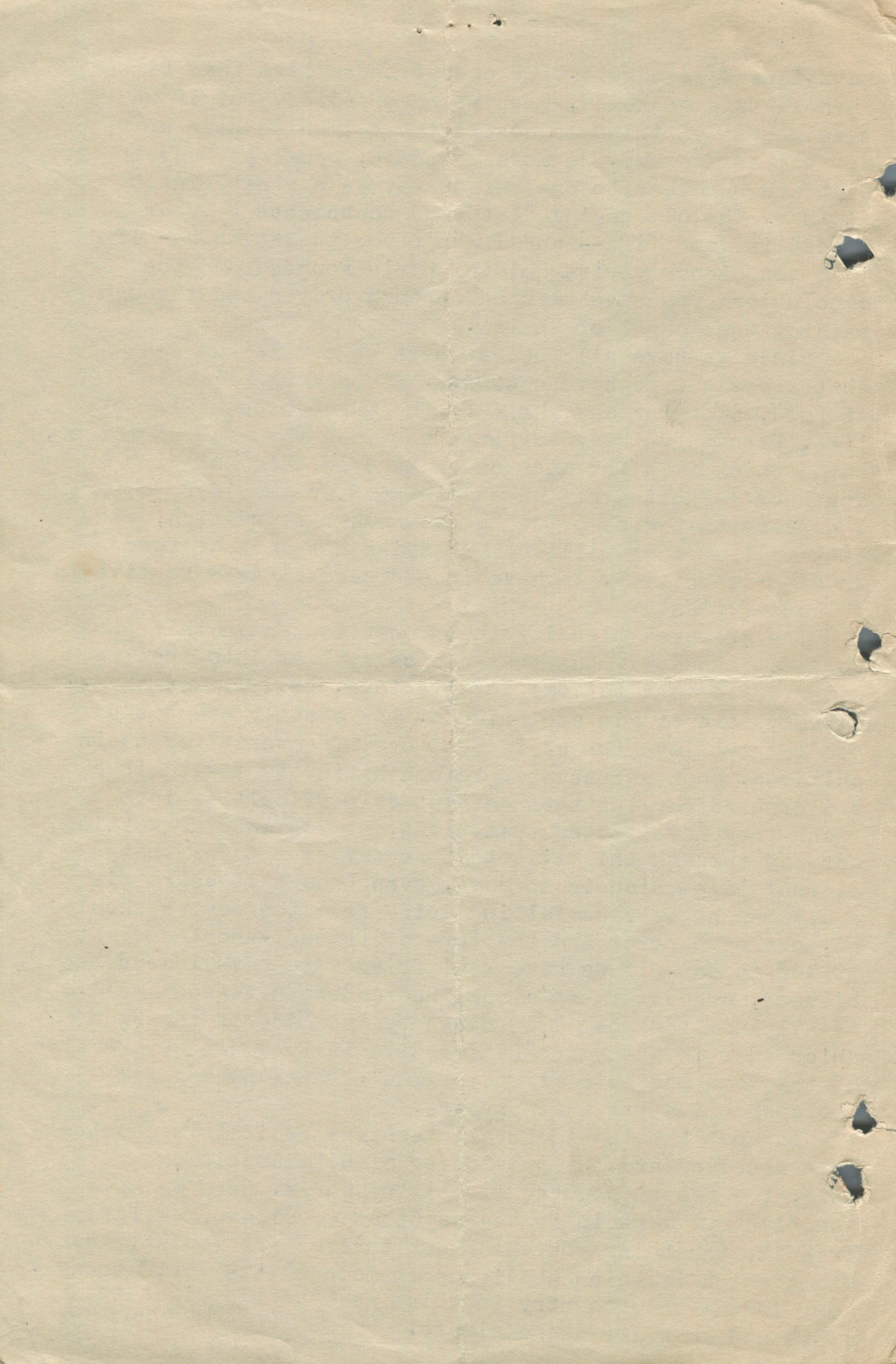


have indeed sown well. Of course there have been times when we have weakened, when we have failed, but if we have honestly tried to do all these then we have sown as well as man may. Be more specific, you say? Many things that are harmless to one person may be a great sin to another. The old saying "Let your conscience be your guide" is good if -- and I won't you to get this-- if that conscience you're guiding by is bounded on the conclusions you have reached through prayer and through reading the gospel of Christ.

Since we have all sown as best we can let us see what blessings we have reaped. At once we all think of food, clothing and shelter, the three essentials of life. Perhaps we have suffered at times for want of these, but I think that for most of us here in this building any such suffering has been mainly of an imaginary nature. I daresay that none of us has come near starvation, yet they tell us that millions are dying for lack of food in other countries. We have indeed been blessed to live in a land of plenty.

The greatest blessing that comes to men in this world and the only one they can carry over into the other world that follows this is love. Love of God through Christ, love of kin and friends. The earthly example of God's great love for us is the love of parents for their children. Just as parents, though hating to see their children suffer let them get out of difficulties into which they have gotten themselves, so God lets us battle our way through this life that we may be fit for that eternal life which is to come, even though it sears His soul when he sees us falling aside from the way we should go. Love of parents and the love of friends-- noblest gift of God to man. If we have real friends we have indeed been blessed, and somewhere along the road we have sown well. We all know the poem "The House by the Side of the Road" which ends in the words "Let me live in my house by the side of the road and be a friend of man". Thank heaven for those who live for that purpose.

And not the least of the blessings we in this country have received are the privileges of citizenship in this, the freest country in all the world. Here we have the right to worship in the way that we please, religious freedom, the thing for which our forefathers fought, that right which is being abolished in much of the world today. Ours is the only country in which we have the right to speak and to write as we please. Nor are we told where we



must work or how we must play. Shouldn't we be willing to undergo a years military training so that we can meet anyone who tries to take these rights away from us with the calm assurance of David? There isn't much chance that we will have to fight in a war for a long time yet for we are blessed in being far removed from most of the wars of the world. Though our government may make some mistakes, for the men whom we elect to administer our government are only human, we know the principles of human rights for which We, The United States of America, stand are those for which Christ preached, lived and died. The blessings of a free country.

Time is getting short. We have realized that we are really more blessed than we deserved. We may have sown well but enemies, our own weaknesses and faults, crept in. Yet, through the kindness of God, we have been able to separate the blessings from the curses, the wheat from the tares as in the parable. We find that the blessings far outweigh the curses and the evils. We see that this parable which our Lord and Jesus gave us two thousand years ago is still applicable today. Above our errors and mistakes, out of our sins and sorrows come blessings because we have continued to believe in ~~in~~ a God who won't let us down. We should be truly thankful.

There was a man who saw God face to face.
His countenance and vestments evermore
Glowed with a light that never shone before,
Saving from him who saw God face to face.
And men, anear him for a little space,
Were sorely vexed at the unwonted light.
Those whom the light did blind rose angrily.
They bore his body to a mountain height
And nailed it to a tree; then went their way;
And he resiated not nor said them nay,
Because that he had seen God face to face.

There was a man who saw Life face to face,
And ever as he walked from day to day,
The deathless mystery of being lay
Plain as the path he trod in loneliness;
And each deep-hid inscrtion could he trace;
How men have fought and loved and fought again;
How in lone darkness souls cried out in pain;
How each green foot ^{of sod} ~~if sod~~ ^{from} sea to sea
Was red with blood of men slain wantonly;

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Again and ever washed the stains away,
Leaving to Love, at last, the victory.
Above the strife and hate and fever pain,
The squalid talk and walk of men,
He saw the vision changeless as the stars
That shown through temple gates or prison bars,
Or to the body nailed upon the tree,
Through each mean action of the life th t is,
The marvel of the life that yet shall be.

If we see the vision of the life that is to be,
we need no earthly blessings to be thankful for.
The opportunity to prepare for that life is enough.
Let us be truly thankful for that opportunity.

O Worship ~~the~~ King
 Come ye Thankful People Come
 For the Beauty of the Earth

O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing
 Love divine all love Excelling

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