

“COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS”  
(Deuteronomy 8:7-18)  
© 2022 Rev. Dr. Brian E. Germano

**[PROP NEEDED: Blank Thankful Tree "leaves" for all congregants,  
passed out by ushers at beginning of services; Show  
"I'm thankful for..." QR code for online livestream]**

[Cornerstone U.M.C.; 11-20-22]

--I--

1. **[BOTH 9am & 11am SERVICES... ]** Read CEB Text: Deuteronomy 8:7-18 and Pray.
2. *"We [Americans] have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved, the many years, in peace & prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace & multiplied & enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to God that made us! It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before [God], to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness." <sup>1</sup>*
3. Other than the word "*behooves*," this almost sounds like what we might hear from a televangelist or revival preacher today, doesn't it? But it's not. Any idea who said it?

A--President Abraham Lincoln back in 1863, as he was signing into law a "*Proclamation of a National Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer*" -- the origins of what we today call our "Thanksgiving" holiday.

1--But even though it was spoke nearly 150 years ago, the warning in its words could easily have been said yesterday...

2--...Because while we *are* a prosperous country, Lincoln's words remind us that there are dangers to prosperity, & responsibilities that come along with blessing

B--Too many times today we're like the little boy returning from a birthday party at a friend's house. His mother asked him, "*Bobby, did you thank Susie's mother for the party?*" He replied, "*Well, I was going to. But a girl ahead of me said, 'Thank you,' and the mother told her not to mention it.... So I didn't!*"

C--Many of us, you see, have grown so accustomed to our own prosperity and blessings (individually & corporately) that we do what this little boy did -- we take them for granted.

4. Well, in our scripture from Deuteronomy 8, we basically find the same thing happening with the people of Israel.

A--Understand that in the chapters immediately prior to this reading, God spoke through Moses about the dangers that Israel would have to face to reach the Promised Land -- things like violence from other inhabitants of the land, lack of food and water, sickness and pestilence, and others.

B--But today's reading from Ch. 8 presents a very *different* kind of danger & challenge: the danger and challenge of *success* -- the threat of self-sufficiency and arrogance; of thinking that their success & achievement was the result of their *own* work!

C--Listen again to Verses 12-18:

*12 When you eat, get full, build nice houses, and settle down, 13 and when your herds and your flocks are growing large, your silver and gold are multiplying, and everything you have is thriving, 14 don't become arrogant, forgetting the LORD your God: the one who rescued you from Egypt, from the house of slavery; 15 the one who led you through this vast and terrifying desert of poisonous snakes and scorpions, of cracked ground with no water; the one who made water flow for you out of a hard rock; 16 the one who fed you manna in the wilderness, which your ancestors had never experienced, in order to humble and test you, but in order to do good to you in the end. 17 Don't think to yourself, 'My own strength and abilities have produced all this prosperity for me.' 18 **Remember the LORD your God! He's the one who gives you the strength to be prosperous in order to establish the covenant he made with your ancestors.***

5. So then, from where do our blessings come? According to this passage, they come *NOT* from our own power, strength, intellect, business skill, or even hard work, but *from God*.

A--Sure, God may *give* us our strength or intellect, or the business savvy that enables us to earn a good living, but that doesn't change the fact that *His* hand is the ultimate source, *not* our own.

B--So, lest we take our blessings for granted, Thanksgiving is a day and time for us to take account of each and every one of them.

C--The words of a famous old hymn say it well:

*"When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,  
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,  
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.*

**(Refrain:)** *Count your many blessings, name them one by one;  
Count your many blessings, see what God hath done;  
Count your blessings, name them one by one;  
Count your many blessings, see what God hath done."*<sup>2</sup>

6. So, what is it that you're thankful for today?

A--Well, for those of you worshipping *in-person* here in the Sanctuary, when you arrived today, you were given a blank "leaf" from one of our "Thankful Trees" in the Narthex

B--[**at 9am ONLY...** And for those of you worshipping *online*, instead of a leaf, on your screen you'll see a QR code for you to scan with your smart phone...]

C--And after I pray, I'm going to sing a song I wrote a number of years ago. And while I do that, I want to invite you either to type or write down on your "leaf" a few things you are thankful for, and -- as a way of saying thank you to God for these, after you're finished, I'd like you either to...

1) (IF ONLINE), to click "*Continue*" when you're done typing, or...

2) (IF IN-PERSON), to place these on one of our "Thankful Trees" in the Narthex as you leave today.

D--And if you're willing for what you wrote to be shared anonymously with your fellow church family in an upcoming "Happenings" email, please either write a CHECK or the word "YES" on the back of your leaf (or ONLINE... check "YES" in the option box).

E--This Thanksgiving, let's take time to "*Count [Our] Blessings*" and thank God.

7. [PRAY: *"Thank you, God, for the bounty of our lives that ultimately comes from your hand alone. Forgive us when we arrogantly presume that all we have comes from us and our own work. Instead, help us to continually take an inventory of our blessings and to remember you as the source of those. Help us to count our many blessings and see what you have done in and for us in our lives. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen."*]

8. [During closing song, congregants write down or type in what they're thankful for on "leaf" or online and add to one of the "Thankful Trees" as they exit; Digital option link/QR code below for ONLINE audience...]

## I'm thankful for...

*Yes, as a testimony of my thanks to God, I'm willing to allow what I write to be anonymously shared with my fellow church family*

---

DIGITAL FORM for online and in-person audience...

<https://cornerstonenewnan.churchtrac.com/connect?ei=N573KMW>



Thankful Tree Leaf

### **ENDNOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> Spoken by Abraham Lincoln March 30, 1863, cited in Roy P. Basler, ed., The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (Volume 6, p. 156).

<sup>2</sup> Hymn "*Count Your Blessings*," written in 1897 by Johnson Oatman.