



**Sermon: Do Not Forget the Lord - Pastor Todd Goldschmidt**

Thanksgiving Eve 7:00 pm – November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011 – At [Living Hope Lutheran Church](#)

**Sermon Text:**

**Deuteronomy 8:1-10** GOD'S WORD Translation (GW)

**Israel Told Never to Forget God**

<sup>1</sup>Be careful to obey every command I give you today. Then you will live, and your population will increase. You will enter and take possession of the land that the LORD promised to your ancestors with an oath.

<sup>2</sup>Remember that for 40 years the LORD your God led you on your journey in the desert. He did this in order to humble you and test you. He wanted to know whether or not you would wholeheartedly obey his commands. <sup>3</sup>So he made you suffer from hunger and then fed you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had seen before. He did this to teach you that a person cannot live on bread alone but on every word that the LORD speaks. <sup>4</sup>Your clothes didn't wear out, and your feet didn't swell these past 40 years. <sup>5</sup>Learn this lesson by heart: The LORD your God was disciplining you as parents discipline their children. <sup>6</sup>Obey the commands of the LORD your God. Follow his directions, and fear him.

<sup>7</sup>The LORD your God is bringing you into a good land. It is a land with rivers that don't dry up. There are springs and underground streams flowing through the valleys and hills. <sup>8</sup>The land has wheat and barley, grapevines, fig trees, and pomegranates. The land has honey and olive trees for olive oil. <sup>9</sup>The land will have enough food for you, and you will have everything you need. The land has rocks with iron ore, and you will be able to mine copper ore in the hills. <sup>10</sup>When you have eaten all you want, thank the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.



## **Sermon: Do Not Forget the Lord**

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If New Year's is about making resolutions for the future, Thanksgiving is about remembering the past. While Turkey, stuffing and mashed potatoes get passed around the table, stories also get swapped. Some already live in the family lore and seem as old as the Pilgrims. Others are brand new events that are destined to be repeated for years to come. While the platters and gravy boats empty, the tales fill out with new details and embellishments as folks "seem to remember" that it went this way, no, that way. You can relive the past year simply by scanning the faces of those seated around the table. Where grandma or grandpa sat last year, there's an empty place—and often, an empty space inside your heart because you miss your grandparent and all the joy and wisdom he or she brought to family events. At the same time, there may be the added faces of babies just born or relatives who have travelled home for the first time in many years. The gray hairs and lined faces of the elderly, the chubby cheeks of the newborns and the spreading "middles" of the middle-aged, all tell part of the story in their own unique, yet significant, ways.

Thanksgiving is really about remembering and reflecting upon you and your family's past, both in recent months and over many generations. One's ability to appreciate bygone blessings enables thanksgiving, allowing gratitude for God to grow in our hearts and homes.

It's been that way ever since the time of Moses. God's people were poised to enter the Promised Land of Canaan after 400+ years of captivity in Egypt and 40 years of wandering the wilderness. Moses would not lead them in. That honor would fall to his God-appointed successor, Joshua. But the LORD inspired Moses to deliver three sermons that form the framework of Deuteronomy, recalling key events in Israel's history which God's people were then to apply to their lives in the land they were about to enter and take possession of. Over and over again, Moses repeated the theme of his homily: "Remember the LORD; remember and do not forget." Throughout the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses graphically reveals God's way of dealing with people as He strives patiently and faithfully to win and keep people for time and for eternity. I wonder if the children of Israel ever tired of hearing Moses repeat the same thoughts ad nauseam. Did they tune him out, or did their ears pick up the ways ours do around the Thanksgiving table when tried and true family tales are told with the same excitement and laughter with which they're always related?



The story of the ancient Israel is, in many ways, our family story too. So Moses says to us tonight: “Be careful to obey every command I give you today. Then you will live, and your population will increase. You will enter and take possession of the land that the LORD promised to your ancestors with an oath. Remember that for 40 years the LORD your God led you on your journey in the desert. He did this in order to humble you and test you. He wanted to know whether or not you would wholeheartedly obey his commands.” Granted, some of those words apply specifically to Israel in Moses’ day and age. But the gist of what he’s getting at applies to us, too. Like them, we are the LORD’s. God has sent us a Prophet greater than Moses—His one and only Son, Jesus the Christ—to deliver us from our slavery to sin, death and the power of the devil by His life, death and resurrection. Just like pharaoh’s army was drowned in the depths of the Red Sea so that Israel could escape certain destruction at their hands, so the LORD has drowned our enemies in the waters of our baptism into Christ. Even as He led Israel safely through the desert, so he has led us year after year through the wilderness of this fallen world.

But Thanksgiving isn’t simply about remembering the facts. The mental exercise of recalling names and dates might be good enough to pass a high school or college exam, but not when it comes to genuine gratitude to God. I might know all about Plimoth Plantation, Squanto and William Bradford, but that doesn’t pass muster with the Master when it comes to celebrating Thanksgiving the way He intends me to. A proper remembrance of Thanksgiving involves much more than making a Pilgrim hat out of construction paper, enjoying a plateful of turkey and pumpkin pie, loosening one’s belt a notch or two and settling into the sofa for an afternoon of football—even if all of those things are part of most family’s Thanksgiving traditions. When God’s Spirit directs Moses to say, “Remember” He’s really instructing us to recall our entire life as “God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved” (Col. 3:12). God desires a spirit of gratitude with our heads, our hearts and our hands. He wants us to rejoice that we’ve been adopted into His family by Spirit-worked faith, as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians: “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ . . . you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (3:26-27; 29).

Children receive what their parents provide: a roof over their head and a comfortable bed; three squares a day plus snacks in between; clothes, shoes, cleats and shin-guards; dance, music, art and drama classes; birthday parties and presents; family trips and traditions; guidance and direction; safety and security; and hopefully a warm, loving, accepting home environment where they can feel free to express their opinions, share their hopes and dreams and their heartaches and disappointments without feeling like they’ll be judged or rejected by mom and dad. The one most important thing we parents can give our kids is our legacy of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and LORD! Lead your little ones into the green pastures and beside the still waters of God’s Word; encourage them to walk in God’s commands; model what it means to trust God’s promises through thick and thin; teach them to share whatever’s on their mind with God in prayer. That’s our highest calling as God’s representatives so it ought to be our highest priority. All that we are and have, both physically and spiritually, are good and gracious gifts from God!



The principles of what Moses says to God’s people of old apply to us as well. No matter how many years God gives us on this earth, He continues to provide for us and protect us. And He “disciplines us . . . as parents discipline their children” by permitting us to pass through various challenges along the way. He does so to draw us closer to Him and to get us to take Him at His Word; to believe, as Jesus told Satan when tempted by him in the desert, that “a person cannot live on bread alone” but must rely on “every word” of promise “the LORD speaks” in Scripture. Our primary objective as God’s sons and daughters—whether we’re parents or children, single or married, old or young—is to “Obey the commands of the LORD [our] God. Follow his directions, and fear him” because of His overwhelming grace and goodness. The God of our salvation calls upon us to fall on our knees in humble adoration and to live lives that reflect His love to others.

No matter how much we complain about the state of affairs in our society, we have to admit that “The LORD [our] God” has allowed us to live in a very “good land.” We’re permitted to gather as God’s people whenever we want to worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is truly a land where we “have everything we need,” and so much more. America remains “the land of opportunity” despite the dramatic downturn in our economy. Although it’s gotten increasingly difficult to find jobs that provide for life’s necessities, we’re still far better off than the citizens of many other lands. May we never take our blessed privileges for granted! Countless other “world powers” have come and gone over the centuries because they turned their back on the God of all creation and refused to acknowledge Him as the Giver “of every good and perfect gift,” especially His greatest gift of all: that of His one and only Son. So tomorrow, after you’ve “eaten all you want” and more, “thank the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.” Especially thank Him for His most precious gifts: forgiveness and eternal life through the work of His Son! Amen