**Thanksgiving - Stories & Illustrations**

**While it is natural to give thanks when all is going well, giving thanks in adversity is more challenging. “Why should I give thanks when I am in pain?” you might ask. The answer lies in a universal law that tells us that all things work together for our highest good. Or, as M. Scott Peck put it, “Everything that happens to us in life does so to make us more holy.” (Douglas Bloch, in New Thought magazine)
The following poem says it all. It was written by an anonymous soldier more than 100 years ago and was found on a battlefield during the Civil War. He knew the true meaning of Thanksgiving: “I asked God for strength that I might achieve; I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey. I asked for help that I might do better things; I was given infirmity that I might do better things. I asked for riches that I might be happy; I was given poverty that I might be wise. I asked for power that I might have the praise of men; I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God. I asked for all things that I might enjoy life; I was given life that I might enjoy all things; I got nothing that I asked for, but everything that I had hoped for. Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered. I am, among all men, most richly blessed.” (Ken Magid)**

**John Wooden, the great U.C.L.A. coach, told his players that when they scored, they were to smile, wink or nod to the player who passed them the ball. A team member asked, “What if he's not looking?” “I guarantee he'll look,” Wooden replied. (Mark R. Littleton, in Reader's Digest)**

**Before A. J. Cronin became a best-selling author, he was a doctor. Once he told about a colleague who gave an unusual prescription to patients afflicted with worry, fear, discouragement or self-doubt. The doctor called it his “thank-you cure.” For six weeks I want you to say thank you whenever anyone does you a favor. And to show you mean it, emphasize the words with a smile. Within six weeks, most of the doctor’s patients showed great improvement. *(Fred Bauer, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Son: “Mom, am I going to have Thanksgiving here or at Dad's?” Mom: “You're going to have Thanksgiving here, and then Christmas with your Dad.” Son: “Who’s Dad going to have Thanksgiving with?” Mom: “I don't know.” Son: “Well, he's not going to have very much to be thankful for if he's all by himself.” (Jerry Bibble, in Shirley & Son comic strip)**

**Since he first tottered into the nation’s living rooms in 1980 on ABC’s short-lived hit “Bosom Buddies,” Tom Hanks has sealed his reputation as the celebrity mensch: not too handsome, not too slick, just really, really nice. Over the past decade he’s had lead roles in the films Philadelphia, Forrest Gump, Apollo 13, and Saving Private Ryan. Lest anyone think the good-guy factor that permeates his work is an act, take it from “Bosom Buddies” producer Tom Miller, it’s not. When “Buddies” was still a fledging pilot nearly 20 years ago, Miller recalls, Hanks was so broke he asked the producers and his partner, Bob Boyett, to lend him $5000. They doubled the amount. “As soon as Tom received his first paycheck there was only one priority – paying the money back,” Miller says. “Even today, if he sees us in a theater, the man drops to his knees and says, ‘Thank you, guys, for helping me with my career!’ It’s embarrassing.” But to Hanks, the over-the-top display makes sense. “Not only did they grant me a career in television by casting me,” he says, “but they were the greatest gentlemen in the world.” (Karen S. Schneider, in People Weekly)**

**Charlie Brown says to Linus: “When I was walking home today, I met a lady on the sidewalk. I did just what you told me, I said, ‘Happy Thanksgiving,’ so she yelled at me. She thought I was being sarcastic.” (Charles M. Schulz, in Peanuts comic strip)**

**After John Lennon was assassinated in late 1980, letters of sympathy poured in to his widow from all over the world. Unable to cope with the stacks of mail which inundated her, Yoko Ono wrote a full-page letter of thanks and placed it in newspapers all over the world. The cost of the ad was $200,000, making this the most expensive thank-you note in history. (Bruce D. Witherspoon, in Astounding Facts)**

**Thankfulness helps you be receptive to the life force of the universe. If you don’t express your gratitude, you lesson your life force. Being appreciative empowers and strengthens you. When you call for a vision with gratefulness flowing through your heart, assistance from the spiritual realm floods into your being. This is a universal law. If you have been praying for help and guidance and no one seems to be listening, start being thankful. Let go of your prayers for what you want and immerse yourself in thankfulness for what you have. This is an act of power. Even if, in the beginning, you have trouble being thankful, act as if you are thankful. There most certainly are things in your life for which you are appreciative. Focus your awareness on those things. This is the mystic path to inner truth. When you are thankful, it is inevitable that you will gain in wisdom and inner strength. (Denise Linn, in Quest: A Guide to Creating Your Vision Quest)**

**In the days of our founders, they were willing to give thanks for mighty little, for mighty little was all they expected. But now, neither government nor nature can give enough but what we think it’s too little. Those old boys in the fall of the year, if they could gather in a few pumpkins, potatoes and some corn for the winter, they were in a thanking mood. If we can’t gather in a new Buick, a new radio, a tuxedo and more government relief, why, we feel that the world is against us. (Will Rogers)**

**One item sent in for copyright at the Library of Congress was a book written by a whimsical Texas businessman, who intended to hand out copies to his customers and friends. Its title was A Million Thanks, and it consisted of the word “thanks” repeated one million times. “No thanks,” replied the Library, declining to register it because a single word is not copyrightable. (Paul Lee Tan, in Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations , p. 1456)**

**A very wise public-relations counsel cautions letter writers to delete the pronoun “I” as much as possible. “A weekend thank-you note that opens “I had a wonderful time,’” he points out, “is not half so captivating as one beginning, ‘You are a wonderful hostess.’ Both say ‘thank you,’ but, ah, my friends, the second is the one that will get you asked back!” *(Bennett Cerf, in The Life of the Party)***

**Nothing's As Good As: A good yawn, with a good stretch. Knowing the answer to a quiz-show question (and having somebody around to hear us answer it). Being a pound lighter on the bathroom scale. Hearing oneself quoted. A parking meter with ten minutes left on it. Hearing laughter in the house in the morning. A reachable itch. (*James Alexander Thom, in Nuggets)***

**Good week for: Coming in third, after researchers at Cornell found that Olympic bronze-medal winners are, on average, happier with their finishes than silver medalists. Silver medalists tend to fixate on the near miss, while bronze winners are thankful to win anything. *(The Week magazine, March 12, 2010)***

**A soldier in the American Third Army was sent to a rest camp after a period of active service. When he returned to his outfit, he wrote a letter to General George Patton and thanked him for the splendid care he had received. General Patton wrote back that for thirty-five years he had sought to give all the comfort and convenience he could to his men, and added that this was the first letter of thanks he had received in all his years in the Army. (Paul Lee Tan, in Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, p. 1460)**

**The power of the moment, the extreme emotional mixture of joy, shock, and disbelief, must have been beyond our imagination. Lazarus was alive! And the catalyst which had made it all happen, the key which had opened the passageway from death to life, was Jesus' prayer of thanksgiving. (Richard & Mary-Alice Jafolla, in The Quest, p. 322)**

**And now, I’ll repeat the traditional Thanksgiving prayer that my mother, Pauline Phillips, wrote years ago: Oh, Heavenly Father, we thank thee for food and remember the hungry. We thank thee for health and remember the sick. We thank thee for friends and remember the friendless. We thank thee for freedom and remember the enslaved. May these remembrances stir us to service, that thy gifts to us may be used for others. Amen. (Dear Abby)**

**Matthew Henry, the famous scholar, was once accosted by thieves and robbed of his purse. He wrote these words in his diary: “Let me be thankful first, because I was never robbed before; second, because, although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, because, although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.” (Church of Ireland)**

**A postal employee opened and read the mail which came to the Dead Letter Office in Washington addressed to Santa Claus. In the three months before Christmas, there were thousands of letters asking for something. In the months after Christmas, there was only one card addressed to Santa Claus thanking him. How quick we are to ask and receive. How slow we are to speak the magic word -- thanks! (Paul Lee Tan)**

**After a stirring concert at New York's outdoor Lewissohn Stadium when Marian Anderson had sung encore after encore, a thousand people crowded around the backstage entrance, asking only a glimpse of the woman who had moved them so deeply. In response to continued calls, the great singer stepped out onto the porch, still wearing her white, concert gown. She stood silent and motionless for a moment, then said quietly to the crowd, “Thank you for letting me sing.” (Carolyn Roland)**

**The parents of a young man who was killed gave their church a check for $1,000 in his memory. When the presentation was made, another mother whispered to her husband, “Let’s give the same for our boy.” “What are you talking about?” asked the father. “Our son didn’t lose his life.” “That’s just the reason,” replied his mother. “Let’s give it in thanksgiving because he’s still alive.” (S.C.U.C.A. Regional Reporter)**

**One of the most breathtaking sights in San Diego is sunset on the beach. As the sun sinks slowly into the horizon, hundreds of seagulls stand and turn quietly to bid farewell. Pelicans fly by in perfect formation, skimming just the top of the waves in their sunset salute. On the bridge across from the beach, thousands of birds line up on the electrical wires, all sitting and facing the sun, saying goodbye to the day. Perhaps they are also silently praying “Thank You, God, for knowing and caring when even one of us falls. Thank you, God, for declaring that even the sparrows shall be fed.” (Laurie Beth Jones, in Jesus CEO, p. 28)**

**Things To Be Thankful For:**

* **Be thankful for the clothes that fit a little too snug, because it means you have enough to eat.**
* **Be thankful for the mess you clean up after a party, because it means you have been surrounded by friends.**
* **Be thankful for the taxes you pay, because it means that you’re employed.**
* **Be thankful that your lawn needs mowing and your windows need fixing, because it means you have a home.**
* **Be thankful for your heating bill, because it means you are warm.**
* **Be thankful for the laundry, because it means you have clothes to wear.**
* **Be thankful for the space you find at the far end of the parking lot, because it means you can walk.**
* **Be thankful for the lady who sings off - key behind you in church, because it means you can hear.**
* **Be thankful people complain about the government, because it means we have freedom of speech.**
* **Be thankful for the alarm that goes off in the early morning hours, because it means you’re alive. *(Ann Landers column, author unknown)***

**A missionary to Africa has related the story of his work with a tribe that was mysteriously poverty-stricken, even though other tribes in the same region were relatively prosperous. He was curious about this strange phenomenon. He spent years researching all aspects of their culture. He came up with but one possibility: in their tribal language, they had no word with which to express gratitude. Perhaps, through some quirk of evolution, they had forgotten how to say thank you. He drew no conclusions, but he did ask a question: “Could this loss of the spirit of thanksgiving have been responsible for their poverty?” It is an interesting and revealing possibility. (Dr. Eric Butterworth, in Spiritual Economics, p. 92)**

**In the novel I Heard the Owl Call My Name, Margaret Craven tells of a young minister, Mark Brian, who is sent by his bishop to a remote parish of Kwakiutl Indians in British Columbia. The Indians, he is told, do not have a word for thank you. But Brian soon finds that these people have exceptional generosity. Instead of saying thanks, it is their custom to return every favor with a favor of their own, and every kindness with an equal or superior kindness. They do their thanks. I wonder if we had no words in our vocabulary for thank you, would we do a better job of communicating our gratitude? Would we be more responsive, more sensitive, more caring? (Fred Bauer, in Reader’s Digest)**

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