

We were five or six, sitting around a table as we waited for our daughters or sons to swim their next event. Just last Saturday we were gathered there, with time to chat, and snack, and read. One was a Lutheran, me, another a Baptist, the rest Roman Catholics, I think. I know them all well enough to know that each is active in the church, worshipping, praying, serving. But last Saturday as we chatted we were complaining. How hard we work, how tired we get, how much we have to do to keep up with it all. Never time for ourselves, always so much being asked. Ain't it awful was the song we sang. Our stomachs full, our children laughing, healthy, We privileged to have such an easy day. Yet ain't we got it tough was the chorus.

Was the Lord listening in last Saturday? Was he troubled by what he heard? Confused? Did he hear our words alongside of the prayers for mothers holding starving children? Were our complaints mingled with the conversations of soldiers afraid they may soon enter battle? Did our discouragement come to him even as he heard the pleading of the mother stricken with MS?

Thanksgiving. Every church in this town ought to be bursting at the seams. Every sentence we speak might well be a hymn of praise. Who has been blessed as we have been blessed?

If only the ones who have gone before us could be here right now. They left Czechoslovakia, or Hungary or Poland, or Germany or Norway. They left hard times, oppression, hunger dreaming of a land of freedom and opportunity. Could they see us today, walk in our shoes, live in our homes, wear our clothes, go here and there in our cars, would they not say, "The dream came true. Beyond our wildest imaginings the dream came true."

But listen to our words. Another day. More troubles. More trials. So weary. Our God just shakes his head. Confused.

Once, the Lord spoke through his prophet Moses. His people had been  
as in Egypt, he had won thier release. For forty years of wandering in  
the wilderness he had fed them, give them water to drink, provided them  
with clothing. " You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God  
has led you these forty years in the wilderness. For the Lord your God is  
bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and  
springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of  
vines and fig trees, a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity,  
in which you will lack nothing. And you shall eat and be full and you  
shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.

Moses could have been describing America. Certainly he speaks to us  
more than tree thousand years later. Remember.

What wildreness has the Lord brought you through? A time of sickness,  
a time of poverty, a time of grief and loss? Remember. Remember where you  
were five thanksgivings ago. Remeber what you feared, ten and twenty and  
thirty years ago. Czn you sing with the hymn writer, "Through many dangers  
toils and snares I have already come, Tis grace has brought me safe thus  
far and grace shall lead me home.

Many of you are facing a wilderness time right now. Sickness, grief,  
pain, not enough money to pay the bills. Remember. Remember that the Lord  
promises there will be a promised land when the wilderness journey is over.  
Many of us will cross the Jordan many times yet in this life. All who  
belong to Christ shall cross into the promised land at death. Remember.

As you remember, continually remember all that the Lord has given, all  
that he has done, Thanksgiving will become a habit of your heart.  
Weariness and complaining will no longer be the marks of our lives, but  
giving thanks the habit of our hearts.

Once giving thanks is the habit of your heart, make it also the habit  
of your lips. Let us hear words of your gratitude. Say to the people of

your life, God has blessed me in you. Take time to speak these words to your family. To parents, spouse, children, grandchildren.

Take time to speak these words to the church. God has blessed me in all of you. You care for me, pray for me, listen to me, what a great blessing. God has blessed me, Lynn Schlessman, by letting me be a part of you.

Take time to speak these words to the people of your life, friends, co workers. God has blessed me in you, blessed me with laughter, and play, with people I can turn to in every need.

But do not leave thanksgiving a habit only of the heart and the lips. Let thanksgiving also be a habit of your hands. In the year 1947 the Board of Missions of the American Lutheran Church committed 3800 dollars per year to support a new ministry in Avon Lake. Through those early years and every year since many others gave of their time and their wealth so that a latecomer like me might worship in this fine place. Remember what the gifts and sacrifices of others have meant as you give to support a Hispanic ministry in Lorain. Remember that a coming generation will give thanks for what you have prepared for them. Remember.

Tomorrow is but one day. Giving thanks can become the habit of every day, the habit of your heart, and lips and hands.