

A THANKSGIVING PRAYER

(Object lesson at end. Draw a simple turkey outline on a posterboard and cut out simple feathers from orange, brown, and yellow construction paper to glue on the turkey at the end of the lesson. On each feather you are going to write things they are thankful for and then glue them on the turkey body.)

-Thanksgiving is approaching and I want to ask everyone what is your favorite dish at Thanksgiving? (...)

-How many of you love to eat turkey at Thanksgiving? (...)

-What was your favorite part of the turkey? (...)

-Am I making you hungry?!

-There is a cute story I want to share with you about a turkey that was written by Eve Bunting called "A Turkey for Thanksgiving." It is about a Moose family who invited some forest friends over for Thanksgiving dinner. Mr. and Mrs. Moose invited Mr. Rabbit, Mr. Goat, Mr. Porcupine and several other forest creatures to come and celebrate Thanksgiving dinner with them. Mrs. Moose was so happy to have them all over, but told Mr. Moose she really wanted a turkey for Thanksgiving dinner. Mr. Moose promised Mrs. Moose that he will go and find her a turkey to celebrate Thanksgiving with and off to the woods he went. He met up with several forest creatures who went along with him to find a turkey for Thanksgiving. They heard there was a fat one down by the river. When they went to the river, they saw a sign that said "Do not disturb, come back after Thanksgiving. No turkeys here!" But off in the distance they saw Mr. Turkey hiding in the bushes. When Mr. Turkey saw Mr. Moose and his group, he took off running. Mr. Moose shouted, "Please don't run, Mr. Turkey, we just want to have you for Thanksgiving dinner!" Mr. Turkey ran even faster. But, because Mr. Turkey was so fat, Mr. Moose was able to catch up with him and grab him. Mr. Moose said, "I'm sorry you don't seem to want to come, but a promise is a promise to my wife!" He and his forest friends dragged Mr. Turkey back home to Mrs. Moose. Mr. Moose was so excited that he had fulfilled his promise to his wife and was looking forward to having Mr. Turkey for dinner. As they entered the house, Mrs. Moose was so delighted to see that Mr. Moose had brought Mr. Turkey for Thanksgiving dinner. Mr. Turkey was terrified as she approached him. She reached out and gently touched his shoulder and told him how glad she was to have him there, that he made their Thanksgiving complete. Then she kindly ushered Mr. Turkey to the table, and to his relief, gave him the best seat in the house, right next to her. There were bowls of acorns, grass, alfalfa sprouts, leaves, roots, and everything you could think of that would appeal to all their vegetarian friends! Mr. and Mrs. Moose were so glad to have Mr. Turkey and all their other friends together with them to celebrate Thanksgiving that they gave thanks and blessed their food! Mr. Turkey was so happy that he was free to celebrate Thanksgiving with his newly found friends.

-What do you think Mr. Turkey thought was going to happen to him when they originally invited him to Thanksgiving dinner? (...)

-Do you think he was a thankful turkey when he found out the true reason? (...)

-Before, he feared and only looked at the circumstances in front of him that seemed horrible, but as the day progressed, he was able to see with a thankful heart those that really cared about him.

-Sometimes, we are like that too, we only look at what seems bad all around us instead of all the good things and people that the Lord has put around us.

-Charles Dickens wrote “There is *always* something to be thankful for.”

-Do you believe that there is always something to be thankful for?(...)

-What are some things you are thankful for?(...)

-In this season of Thanksgiving, I thought it would be good to remind ourselves of things we can be thankful for, no matter what situation we may be in.

-Thankfulness is a *gift* that our Father in Heaven gives us if we would choose to exercise it.

-It is a gift because when we choose to exercise it, it changes our hearts to focus on what God has given us, instead of focusing on what we feel we lack.

-The pilgrims knew this well when they came to America.

-They knew that everything they had and did was a gift from the Father’s hand. Even in tough circumstances, they chose to thank their Heavenly Father for the good in their lives.

-Does anyone know what tough circumstances they were under that made them leave England? (The Church of England was very corrupt. People had to follow certain rules imparted on them by the priests at that time. They were even told that if they didn’t convert, they would die. Some were even killed for speaking out against the Church and the papacy. The higher authorities in the church would even go to the poor people and tell them they owed a certain amount of money for their sins, then they would come back later and say that wasn’t enough money and make them pay more.)

-So the pilgrims left for America to have religious freedom.

-They brought a special book with them called the Book of Common Prayer and in this book there is a prayer called “A Litany of Thanksgiving”. It was written in 1549.

-They used this prayer to remind them to be thankful during all the hardships they faced.

-I thought we would use this same prayer today to remind us of all the things we can be thankful for as well, even in hardships. So, let’s begin with the first part of the this prayer and read it together out loud, #1 on our Verse Sheet: (“*Let us give thanks to God our Father for all His gifts so freely bestowed upon us: For the beauty and wonder of your creation, in earth and sky and sea.’ We thank you, Lord!*”)

-What does the very beginning of this prayer tell us to do? (Let us give thanks to God our Father!)

-How is He our Father? (When we accept Jesus, His Son, as our Savior from our sins, we become His child and He our Father.)

-How can this comfort you? (...)

-As it continues, it talks about His gifts to us in the beauty of the earth, the sky and sea.

-What makes the earth so beautiful to you? (...)

-What makes the sky so beautiful to you? (...)

-What makes the sea so beautiful to you? (...)

-When you think about all of this, do you think God is an amazing Creator? (...)

-The Bible says that just looking at creation proves that there is a God.

-Let's read our verse that tells us this, #2 on our Verse Sheet: (NLT version)

(Romans 1:20 "For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities-His eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.")

-It says that through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature. Are there things in creation that still baffles scientist today? (Yes, even today they still do not know so many things)

-Those are the invisible qualities that show God's divine nature and power, proving that He exists! These are the things we are thankful for.

-Let's continue with our "Litany of Thanksgiving" with the next verse, #3 on our Verse Sheet. Let's read it out loud together: ("For all that is *gracious* in the lives of men and women, *revealing the image of Christ*. We thank you, Lord.")

-Can you think of a person that you know of that is gracious, forgiving, loving and kind? (...)

-How does that behavior *reveal the image of Christ*? (Because that is what Christ revealed to us when He was here on earth in bodily form. He was loving, kind, gracious and forgiving.)

-That is what this verse means, they are acting Christ-like. When you are around them you are encouraged and see Christ in them.

-Can you think of someone that you can be that to today? (...)

-Let's continue with the 3rd part of this prayer, #4 on our Verse Sheet: ("For our daily food and drink, our homes and families, and our friends. We thank you, Lord!")

-Do you thank God *daily* for these things and these people? (...)

-Do you consider them as gifts to us from our Father in Heaven? (...)

-What would life be like without them? (...)

-Let's read the 4th part of this prayer together, #5 on our Verse Sheet: ("For minds to think, and hearts to love, and hands to serve. We thank you, Lord!")

-Are you thankful for the working mind you have right now, even if it may not remember everything? (...)

-Are you thankful that your hands work and you can serve others? (...)

-Some of our hands cannot serve due to age or disability, but what is something we can all do according to this verse? (Love!)

-We can always have a heart to love.

-Can you think of someone that the Lord wants you to show love to today? (...)

-Let's read the next part of this prayer, #6 on our Verse Sheet: ("For health and strength to work and leisure to rest and play. We thank you, Lord!")

-Do you consider work a gift from the Lord? (...)

-Can anyone share how work can be a gift from God? (...)

-Do you consider leisure a gift from the Lord? (...)

-Can anyone share how leisure can be a gift from God? (...)

-Let's read the next part of this prayer, #7 on our Verse Sheet: ("For the brave and courageous, who are patient in suffering and faithful in adversity. We thank you, Lord!")

-Who do you think are some brave and courageous people who are patient in suffering and faithful in adversity? (Missionaries, church leaders, our brothers and sisters in Christ in countries where they are persecuted for their faith but still proclaim the name of Jesus, etc.)

-How may they suffer? (...)

-How can we pray for them? (...)

-Here, we are reminded to thank God for them and pray for them and the sacrifices they make.

-Let's continue and read the next part of this prayer, #8 on our Verse Sheet: ("For all valiant seekers after truth, liberty, and justice. We thank you, Lord!")

-Who would be valiant seekers after truth, liberty and justice? (Pastors, bible study leaders, politicians seeking God's wisdom in the political world, even those of us who study God's Word because we want to know the truth, etc.)

-Why should we be thankful for them? (Because they help us see truth where the world tries to hide it.)

-Let's read the next part of this prayer, #9 on our Verse Sheet: ("For the communion of saints, in all times and places. We thank you, Lord!")

-Who are the saints? (We are, those who love the Lord.)

-Does that mean we think we are perfect? (No, we just know we are forgiven.)

-What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think about the communion of saints? (Fellowship. Being together with our brothers and sisters in Christ. United with each other in worship, at Church, in Bible Studies, in Prayer together, in spending time together, also when we go to Heaven we will be in fellowship with the saints up there for eternity.)

-So, we might as well learn how to get along with each other right now!

-We need to be thankful for these times together.

-Let's read the last part of this prayer together and concentrate on the first two words, #10 on our Verse Sheet: ("*Above all*, we give you thanks for the great mercies

and promises given to us in Christ Jesus our Lord; To Him be praise and glory, with You, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, *now and forever*. Amen!")

-What are the first two words? (Above all!)

-Why do you think it is important “Above all, [that] we give thanks for the great mercies and promises given to us in Christ Jesus our Lord”? (Nothing else should get in the way of thanking the Lord for all His mercies and promises that were fulfilled through Jesus Christ that are new to us everyday.)

-The second part of this verse says to give praise and glory to Jesus, God’s Son, along with God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

-According to the very end of this verse, we are to do it when? (Now and forever!)

-That’s right. From now and into eternity we are to praise them for all things.

-I thought it would be fun to do this at the end of our lesson today to give God glory for *all things*.

-To help us with this, I drew a turkey on this posterboard and brought some feathers made out of construction paper so I can write on each one something that you are thankful for. Then I am going to glue each one of them on the turkey and hopefully we are going to see a fluffy turkey with all our thankful words, just like Mr. Turkey probably had for everyone when he found out he was the guest of Honor in our story earlier.

-So, let’s begin with some things we are thankful for to God, Who is our Guest of Honor here today:

(family, friends, waking up each morning, flowers, sunrise, sunsets, moonlight, grandchildren, children, food, clothing, help, freedom, salvation, gift of eternal life, churches, colors of fall, pets, peace, joy, hope, music, caregivers, coffee, etc.)

A THANKSGIVING PRAYER VERSE SHEET

1. ***“Let us give thanks to God our Father for all His gifts so freely bestowed upon us: For the beauty and wonder of your creation, in earth and sky and sea.” We thank you, Lord!***
2. **Romans 1:20 “For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities-His eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.”**
3. **For all that is *gracious* in the lives of men and women, *revealing the image of Christ*. We thank you, Lord!**
4. **For our *daily* food and drink, our homes and families, and our friends. We thank you, Lord!**
5. **For minds to think, and hearts to love, and hands to serve. We thank you, Lord!**
6. **For health and strength to work, and leisure to rest and play. We thank you, Lord!**
7. **For the brave and courageous, who are patient in suffering and faithful in adversity. We thank you, Lord!**
8. **For all valiant seekers after truth, liberty, and justice. We thank you, Lord!**
9. **For the communion of saints, in all times and places. We thank you, Lord!**
10. ***Above all*, we give you thanks for the great mercies and promises given to us in Christ Jesus our Lord; To Him be praise and glory, with you, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, *now and forever*. Amen!**