



Who Are We and Why Are We Here

Part 4: Life Together

Thanksgiving.

The story of what is commonly called our first thanksgiving with John Alden and friends highlights God's providence in the beginning days of this nation. Of course the winds of political correctness ravaging the curriculum in our schools and the turbulence of cultural change has tried in large part to edit out such images.

Still the custom persists. Many will feast together and review their lists of things for which they are thankful. References will be made to jobs, good health, a host of friends, and maybe even the measure of abundance in their lives. But fewer and fewer express anything beyond a general sense of thankfulness with little or no thought given to whom, if anyone in particular, they are thankful.

Sadly the vast majority are like the little boy who was asked by his teacher why we have a Thanksgiving holiday. With eyes rolling to betray his sense of what ought to be obvious, he replied, "So we know when to start Christmas shopping."

During the last few weeks, the focus of *The Flame* has been on who we are as the Body of Christ. The message of Exodus 19 and the chapters that follow highlight the wonder of living life together as a people in covenant with God. Life together should fill us with genuine thankfulness.

Consider, for a moment, that very expression "life together." Images come to mind of the host of relationships we have as part of the Church, or probably more to the point, the local church where we enjoy our times of worship and fellowship.

That, of course, is indeed to be greatly valued. We are a Body, and each of us is a member of that Body. Each of us has a purpose, a place and function as part of the whole.

But we are truly impoverished if "life together" is only defined in terms of horizontal relationships. The "together" of covenant life is as much and even more about our vertical relationship than our horizontal ones. Life together begins with the God who initiates the covenant and in whom the covenant is complete. As important as how one member of the Body lives in relationship with the others, such relationships can never be complete without the defining relationship of the Body to the Lord of the Body. He alone is the Head of the Church, and while we serve one another, we do not act at the bidding of each other, but at His bidding alone.

How thankful we can be that all we do has meaning and purpose measured not by one another, but by the One who as the Head brings us, even with all of our foibles and failures, into the harmony of His purpose and turns our limited sense of life together into the wonder of the incomprehensible togetherness with our Author and Lord of Life.

Taking Our Next Step Together

Lord God, in this time of Thanksgiving, may our hearts be impacted with awe at Your purpose for us as a Body. We ask that day by day the wonderment of being complete in Your plan and purpose, Your giftings and callings would capture us and empower us to experience genuine gratitude for Life in whom we live and are complete together.