

# Sermon Notes – November 20, 2011

Hempfield United Methodist Church – [www.hempfieldumc.com](http://www.hempfieldumc.com)

---

## Thanksgiving Worship

### ***An American Icon***

The painting by Norman Rockwell entitled “Freedom from Want” epitomizes the iconic character of the American Thanksgiving. In it, an elderly man and woman set an enormous turkey before their extended family on Thanksgiving Day. The painting illustrates the rewards of the middleclass American values of hard work and loyalty to family and community. The feast acknowledges God’s blessings on those who live in accordance with the values of the Christian faith and American society.

### ***The Modern Reality***

Thanksgiving has changed over the years to include many other values. It is a day for watching football and planning for Christmas shopping on Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving. It is tempting to get so wrapped up in these additions that even Christian families will forget to give thanks.

### ***Three Historical Sketches***

A quick look at the events of history will help us regain the meaning of Thanksgiving.

#### 1. The Civil War - 1863

After the turn of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national day of Thanksgiving as an act to unify the nation under an understanding of the benevolence of God, even while the war persisted.

#### 2. The Pilgrims – 1620

The pilgrims of the Massachusetts Bay Colony came to America to escape religious persecution. In the winter of 1620, more than half of them died. In the autumn of 1621, the remaining 53 colonists celebrated a day of Thanksgiving to remember the benevolence of God.

### 3. The Israelites – 1100 b.c. – Deuteronomy 26

After wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, the Israelites entered the Promised Land. With the crops of their first harvest, they worshipped the Lord on a day of Thanksgiving.

#### ***The Common Thread***

The common thread in these events is the presence of suffering. While we would expect that suffering would lead to bitterness toward God, for those who identify themselves as God's people, quite the opposite is true. Suffering turns our heart to God. Here's why:

Suffering changes our perspective on what is important.

A change in perspective on what is important leads to Thanksgiving.

*So what is important to you?*

#### ***Questions to Ponder:***

What are the things you are truly thankful for?

Do you shape your life around these things?

Is there a connection between affluence and unthankfulness?

What are the things you can do on Thanksgiving Day to truly give God thanks?