

Philippians 4:10-20

How can you make Thanksgiving last? Many people ponder how to extend the Thanksgiving joy beyond one late November weekend... The answer for most people on how to make Thanksgiving last is... leftovers. Here's your turkey sandwich for lunch again, already many days into December. On a serious note, plenty of people are searching for the way to keep that feeling of comfort, that grateful attitude which is displayed during this time of year. What answer could you give to them?

One believer had a lot to say about Thanksgiving joy, and he wrote to a congregation about it. Paul opened up by saying that he rejoices greatly to see what concern the congregation has shown over the course of time. These people showed love for their Savior by generously providing for the needs of Paul. He takes time to thank them for their gifts and he reflects on his attitude in response to these blessings, much like how we take time to do so over Thanksgiving.

Paul says he has learned to be content. He has latched onto the secret to remaining content in every situation. Ah, contentment, our best quality as Christians here in the United States. Must be easy not to complain in a country with many freedoms, in an area with wonderful health systems and neighborhoods, in a church that thrives and grows together with many opportunities to hear God's Word, in a home with enough space to live without feeling pressed in on all sides, with a heart that's seen the light of Christ and knows of its salvation so that earthly troubles are no longer impeding our ability to have a good attitude. No, Paul didn't say it was easy for him as a Christian either. He spoke as one who had been taught contentment, having been both in need and having plenty, which leads him to put forth this confident conclusion, "I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

See, contentment was found in Christ. Don't get caught up in the beginning of that phrase, look at the powerful ending. Paul didn't live at peace before he knew Christ. But he had it now and he viewed that gift of peace as something that lasted, something he didn't have to chase down any more. With Christ, Paul realized that whether he was in need or whether he had plenty, his mind was at ease. He was thankful and had joy, Thanksgiving joy that people continue to chase after.

So how do we make Thanksgiving last? Well, we could pass it on, just like the congregation in Philippi, what we have received we pass along to others. Yes, money and time and even our leftovers, but more so the love of God which he has graciously poured out on us. The greatest way to make Thanksgiving last is the fact that God continues to meet all our needs. This is what truly keeps Thanksgiving and a thankful heart going. How do we answer the person who's searching for what keeps this grateful attitude going? We share the good news of our Savior. God sent his son Jesus to pay for our sins. He's given us faith and opened up the gates of heaven. He's even extended his goodness to give us good gifts here on earth, many of which we'll see and gather around this weekend. Take some time to have Thanksgiving joy - for family, for friends, for food, and for the glorious freedom that God gives through Jesus.