

Thanksgiving Day

(With home table praise & thanksgiving)



By:
*Frederick L. Pattison,
A Christian!*

"Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and extol Him with music and song. For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods."
(Psalm 95:2-3a)



The quotes from the Bible used in this booklet are taken from *Today's New International Version* (TNIV). When Biblical quotes are taken from other translations they are properly noted.

Introduction

In **Section I** of this booklet I share a brief history of **Thanksgiving Day** and its importance to Christians. In **Section II** I have outlined a **model** that may be used by families and friends as a time of offering unto God praise and thanksgiving around the table **before or after** eating together. You will note that there are a number of songs that may be sung together. Each home group may decide to sing one or more of these songs. For some families this may be the first time they have sung together away from a gathering of their church family. There are passages of Scripture to use. I've also included a brief time for remembering our Lord in the bread and wine (table communion).

One member of the family or group should **lead** but not dominate. Let everyone participate. This will enrich the observance of Thanksgiving Day as families and groups of Christians.

My prayer is that **this Thanksgiving Day** will be one in which each person gathered at your table will long remember. May God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be honored, exalted and praised in this season of thanksgiving.



Section I

Thanksgiving Day

To me as a Christian thanksgiving is more than one day in November that we Americans set aside to offer thanksgiving to God. As our American society continues to grow increasingly more secular I'm convinced that the majority of Americans no longer give much thought or attention to offering thanks to the Lord God of heaven and earth. Yet we as a people and **as a nation have much to give thanks to God for.** We often sing "**God Bless America**" when God has over and over again blessed this nation. In spite of the **downward spiral** that our nation is taking **God still reigns.** There is much to be thankful for as children of God.



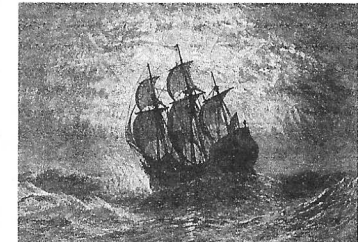
Originally this day was set aside as a **Christian observance.** Somewhere along the line this aspect of the observance has been **largely forgotten** by many if not most Americans. Our school children often dress up as pilgrims during this season. However, if we ask both them as well as the adults just who were the pilgrims, few seem to really know or even care. Though we've never been a Christian nation in the Biblical sense, as a nation **our foundation** is rooted in and upon Judeo-Christian principles, whether the secular historians are willing to admit it or not. Thanksgiving Day to the average American is **no longer considered** Christian but has become a **secular holiday** with little, if any, emphasis given to what it represents. It is more than a day for feasting, for sports, for outings, etc. These things are not wrong. But **the main theme** of being thankful to God is too often being **left out.** Many, if not most, churches *no longer* have Thanksgiving services. This day has become largely a family day. And that's good, as we see the breakdown of our families throughout the nation, and even in our churches. Yet **America desperately needs** families where prayer, reading the Bible and assembling with fellow believers are the norm rather than the exception. Again, this is missing from too many families.

The first recorded Thanksgiving took place not in the Massachusetts colony but in **St. Augustine, Florida** on September 8, 1565 by a group of Spanish settlers. These Roman Catholic settlers were thankful to God for bringing them safely to the New World. After their Mass of Thanksgiving they feasted.

The British had a greater influence upon North America than did the Spanish. The Thanksgiving Day Observance that we are most familiar with is that of those men and women who were looking for somewhere to be able **to worship God** free from the restraints of the State Church of England. These early settlers came to the shores of Virginia and shortly thereafter to what was called New England. Those who settled in New England were known as: **Pilgrims, Puritans, and Separatists**

It should be noted that there were **differences** between these groups, though it was not very long before these differences melted away. Originally many of them were also part of the Church of England, however **their biblical convictions** led them to rebel from that system.

The settlers who we are most familiar with are that company who came across the Atlantic to these shore on a ship named **the Mayflower.** This ship sailed from Southampton, England in September 1620 with **104 Pilgrims.** It was originally heading for the New York area where the Hudson River empties into the Atlantic Ocean. However due to the weather their ship was **blown off course** and landed in the **Cape Cod Bay** area after **66 days** at sea.



We are told that **about half** of the passengers on the Mayflower left their native land **seeking freedom to worship God** free from the restraints of the State Church. A man by the name of **William Bradford** led the group. Upon arriving in the New World **Bradford** wrote:

"Being thus arrived in a good harbor and brought safe to land they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven, who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth, their proper element."

During the voyage their numbers were depleted by sickness including: scurvy, pneumonia, and tuberculosis. **Less than half** the original Pilgrims remained alive and several of these were sick themselves. Only six or seven of them were strong enough to minister to the sick and to aid comfort to those of their number who were dying.

When the colony was established **Mr. Bradford** became **the first governor**. Not knowing the local Indians the residents were fearful of being killed. However these Indians proved to be peaceful and hospitable. **They aided** the surviving Pilgrims showing them how to tend their gardens in order to raise food for survival in the new land.

It should be noted that before setting foot on land this small company of Christians wrote what we know as "**The Mayflower Compact**." They adopted this document by consensus. Its purpose was to avoid the mistakes of previous settlers in other areas who did not adopt laws to guide them as they sought to establish new colonies. In their attempt to avoid the same mistakes they sought to be ready for the days ahead. As the majority of them were **Separatists** the Compact set



them free from some of the restraints of the laws of England. It set up a government free from outside control. The picture on the left portrays the group affixing their signatures to the Mayflower Compact. The **Mayflower Compact** reads as follows:

"In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord, King James, by the Grace of God, of England, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, e&. Having undertaken for the

Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia; do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid; And by Virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the General good of the Colony; into which we promise all due submission and obedience. In Witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord, King James of England, France and Ireland, the eighteenth and of Scotland the fifty-fourth, Anno Domini, 1620."

You will note **their allegiance given firstly to God** then to their king as English citizens. They took seriously **the Biblical injunction** which exhorts believers thusly,

"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:1-3)

How often do we today, just as these early settlers did disagree with those ruling over us in government? Yet as Christians we are to be **subject to them and to pray for them** as the above passage instructs. Note what the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome, the seat of an evil emperor,

"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is

right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, **it is necessary to submit to the authorities**, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience." (Romans 13:1-5)

Even though the signers of the Mayflower Compact disagreed with the State Church of which their king¹ was its head, they were determined to submit yet at the same time to stand firmly upon their Biblical convictions.

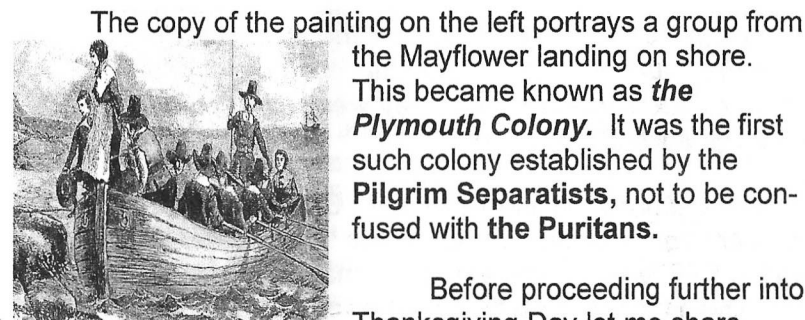
John Adams and many other historians believe that the Mayflower Compact was **the foundation** of our U.S. Constitution which was written **150 years later**.

Contrary to what modern historians, politicians and some religious leaders would have us believe **our nation was founded by men who honored God**. They also saw that this nation was **founded upon Biblical principles**. I am aware that many of them were Deists. Their views of God and God's involvement in the nation differed somewhat from what we believe. They understood God's involvement in our world differently from Biblical Christianity, yet we as a people need to offer **our ongoing thanks to God** that this nation had founders who were not afraid to declare their allegiance to the God of heaven and earth and to the Bible as the Word of God.

Patrick Henry said: "It cannot be emphasized too strongly, nor too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians, not on religion, but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ".

Every day but especially on **Thanksgiving Day**, as followers of Jesus Christ we should **offer our thanks** unto God for our nation.

¹ The king who was reigning on the British throne at that time was **King James**, the king who authorized the translating and printing of the Bible in the English language that we American refer to as: **The King James Version**.



The copy of the painting on the left portrays a group from the Mayflower landing on shore. This became known as **the Plymouth Colony**. It was the first such colony established by the **Pilgrim Separatists**, not to be confused with **the Puritans**.

Before proceeding further into Thanksgiving Day let me share some of the differences between **the Pilgrims, the Puritans and the Separatists**.

Originally **there were differences between** the Pilgrims and the Puritans. **Separatists** were included in **both** groups. **The Separatists left** the State Church of England.² Their desire and goal was a church that returned to its Biblical roots. In their view the Church of England had long before departed from the Biblical Faith as espoused by the Lord Jesus and the original apostles. **The Plymouth Colony was settled by the Pilgrims who were also Separatists** who had sailed on the Mayflower. The later **Massachusetts Bay Colony** was settled **by the Puritans** who were not Separatists. They advocated **remaining within** the Church of England seeking to purify and reform it to what they believed it should be.

Historians and many Christian writers to this day get the two groups confused. It is important to know their early differences.

The Pilgrims and Puritans

Those who came on the Mayflower were Pilgrims. As mentioned earlier they established **the Plymouth Colony**.

The **King James Version (KJV)** of the Bible uses the word "***pilgrims***" on two occasions referring to believers:

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims . . ." (1 Peter 2:11a)

² The Church of England is the mother church of the Anglican family which includes in our country the Episcopal Church.

*"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed, that **they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.**" (Hebrews 11:13)*

Somewhere along the line we modern Christians have lost the concept that authentic Christians are "**pilgrims and strangers**" in this world. We *are not* permanent residents of this planet. This *is not* our final home. Our spiritual ancestors held this Biblical concept. **Today** most American Christians appear to be very satisfied with living here and getting caught up in the status quo. In my lifetime on this planet I've seen the difference in our Christian music and in much of our preaching. When I was growing up many of the Gospel Songs emphasized **our final destination** as being with the Lord and heaven. Today this seems to have changed. Much of our "praise" music devotes considerable emphasis on **how we feel and what we want**. I guess if I had lived during the settling of our country I would have been more at home fellowshiping with the **Pilgrims than with the Puritans**.

The Puritans were a much larger group than the **Pilgrims**. The **Puritans** were also more affluent than the **Pilgrims**. The **Puritans** were often better educated than were the **Pilgrims**. Both groups held much in common. To get a better insight into these groups the following description may prove helpful.

*"Puritanism in England was essentially a movement within the established church for the purifying of that church – for ministers godly and able to teach, for a simplifying of ritual, for a return to the virtues of primitive Christianity. There was nothing revolutionary about the main body of its doctrine. Its innovating principle was in the idea that the Bible, rather than any established religious hierarchy, was the final authority. Therefore every man [woman], every individual, had direct access to the word of God. It was **the Puritan's aim** to reconstruct and purify not only the church, but individual conduct and all the institutions [people] live by."*³

³ Quote from the book *Bradford of Plymouth* by Bradford Smith.

The church that the **Pilgrims and the Puritans** sought to reform was the Anglican Church of England. That church had *never experienced* the degree of reform experienced on the continent in **Lutheranism** and the **Reformed churches**. The **Puritan Movement** can be somewhat compared to the **Pietist Movement** among the Lutherans. As the State Lutheran Church grew spiritually cold and overwhelmed by a **dead orthodoxy** the **Pietist Movement** developed within Lutheranism. It was felt that a return to the basics of Luther was needed. The **Pietists** sought this restoration of basic Biblical beliefs which had been rediscovered by Luther. In like manner the **Puritans** developed within the Church of England.

The **Massachusetts Bay Colony** considered the Church of England as its official church. However the Anglicans had no bishops in New England at that time. This created a lack of much of the bureaucracy that was part of the English Church. In relocating to New England a **semi-separation** took place. This **opened the door** for the Congregational form of church polity.⁴ This resulted, eventually, in many of the congregations separating themselves from the Anglican Church of England and becoming what became known as the Congregational churches.⁵ As differences between the **Pilgrims and Puritans** dissolved both eventually found themselves in what became known as the **Congregationalist denomination**.

Pastor John Robinson of the Plymouth Colony greatly influenced the churches in his area to accept congregationalism in church structure. **Robinson** continued to hold the basic doctrine of the Anglican Church but **rejected** their church polity. He tied church polity with doctrine. The English Church, tied to the State, required that every person born in given areas was entered on the church rolls of the local parish. **Robinson** advocated a **regenerate church membership** i.e., *only those who personally professed faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord were to be entered on the church rolls*. In his view Christians were to be separated from the world and live as disciples

⁴ **Church Polity** refers to the structure and government of the church.

⁵ The **Congregational churches** through the years have merged with other denominations and today are known as **United Churches of Christ**. This is one of the most theological liberal denominations in Protestantism today

of Christ. Each local church developed a **covenant** to which each member was required to subscribe upon joining the local church. This concept of a local Church Covenant was also found for many years in Baptist churches. It can still be found in **African-American Baptist congregations**. Eventually the Congregationalists developed what became known as "**a half-way covenant**." This was adopted because of their acceptance and practice of **infant baptism**. I believe that this eventually became **their downfall** as members were accepted into their churches who *had not* been born again.

It should be noted that **another difference** between the Pilgrims and the Puritans was their size. By **1630** there were **20,000 Puritans** in Massachusetts Bay whereas there were only **2,500 Pilgrims in the Plymouth Colony**.

John Winthrop was governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. **William Bradford** was governor of the Plymouth.

The **Massachusetts Bay Colony** was more closely aligned with the local government than was the **Plymouth Colony** where there was a much clearer separation.

Another interesting difference between the two groups was that the **Pilgrims** purchased the land upon which they settled from the Indians while the **Puritans** simply took the land and claimed it as their own.

Now to Thanksgiving

The Pilgrims at Plymouth made friends with the local Indians. In fact one of the native Americans who lived with the Wampanoag tribe, **Squanto** by name, was instrumental in teaching the Pilgrims how to grow corn. He also served as an interpreter between the local Indians and the English. He had learned English while a slave in Europe.

In the **Fall of 1621** the **Pilgrims** had their first harvest in Plymouth. Though over half of their number had died during their year in New England they continued to develop and build their new colony.



Many of the **Pilgrims were students of the Old Testament**. They held their first authentic Thanksgiving in 1623. Many people believe that because of their familiarity with the Jewish Feasts that they set aside this observance based somewhat on **Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles) aka Feast**

of Ingathering.

I would like to see American Christians placing a greater emphasis on offering thanks to God for our freedoms as a nation and for the blessings that God has and continues to bestow upon us. The emphasis on a great meal enjoyed with family, loved ones and reaching out to others less fortunate than many of us is also important. **My top priority** is that we place **God first and foremost** in our offering of thanks.

It is interesting to note that our nation's first president, **George Washington**, issued a presidential proclamation setting aside the **first national Thanksgiving Day**. He did this on October 3, 1789. How anyone can read statements such as the following and deny the Biblical roots of our nation is beyond my understanding. Here is that proclamation:

"Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor, and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me 'to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.

Now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th of November next to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be. That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks, for his kind care and protection of the People of this Country previous to their becoming a Nation, for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of his providence, which we experienced in the course and conclusions of the late war, for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed, for the peaceable and rational manner, in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national One now lately instituted, for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed; and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge; and in general for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us.

And also that we may then unite in most humble offering our prayers and supplication to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions, to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually, to render our national government a blessing to all the people, by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed, to protect and guide all Sovereigns and Nations (especially such as have shown kindness unto us) and to bless them with good government, peace, and concord. To promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science among them and Us, and generally to grant unto all Mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as he alone knows to be best.'

Given under my hand at the City of New York the third day of October in the year of our Lord 1789."

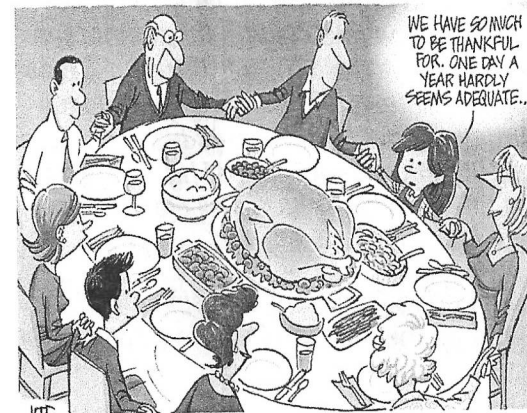
As you read Washington's proclamation note **his emphasis** upon God in our nation. How times have changed in our beloved country. Whether our national leaders and courts want to acknowledge it or not **GOD STILL REIGNS**. God is on

the Throne of Heaven. As people of God we desperately need **to return** to the God of our forefathers, the God of the Bible and yes the God of Biblical Christianity.

Our youth need to hear and know why we as a nation set aside this special day of offering thanks and prayer unto God. Too often this priority is left out. As Christians we need to be **at the forefront** of returning to **its primary meaning** in giving thanks.

Biblical Thanksgiving

The Bible places a great emphasis on giving our thanks unto God. In reality as Christians we should be a people of thanksgiving for who God is, what God has and is doing in our lives and the joy of knowing that in Christ **we have been** adopted into the Family of God. The cartoon below speaks to our need in offering our thanks unto God:



Have you ever wondered as you sit at the Thanksgiving Day Table, or at any meal for that manner, why so often it is the food that is blessed? The next time that you sit at the table and offer thanks keep in mind that the food doesn't need a blessing it is God who has and continues to bless us. Rather than "asking the blessing," **offer a blessing to God**. As believers we are exhorted to **"bless the LORD!"** Psalm 103 (KJV) places a great emphasis on blessing the Lord.

"Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his

benefits: *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth they mouth with good things; so that they youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

"The LORD, is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children . . . Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the LORD; all his works in all places of his dominion; bless the LORD, O my soul."

Whatever happened to Christians blessing God? Note what the Psalmist wrote on this matter of offering thanksgiving to God in **Palm 100**,

"Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise: give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever, his faithfulness continues through all generations."

Section II

As you sit at the Thanksgiving Table I would like to encourage you to spend time offering unto God your thanks. In

preparation for this special day it might be profitable to read, study and pray over some of the passages in Scripture that speak to and encourage believers to offer their thanks unto the God of heaven and earth. I have



listed some Biblical passages to aid in this: **Psalm 34:3; 50:14; 95:2; 107:22; 136; 2 Corinthians 9:12; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 2:7; 4:2; Revelation 7:12 also Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:17; 1 Corinthians 11:24; Mark 8:6; John 6:11; Acts 27:35; Romans 14:6; Ephesians 5:20; 1 Timothy 4:3.**

At the Table

Sing one or more songs

Read a Passage of Scripture on Thanksgiving

Around the table offer thanks unto God verbally

Sing another song

Offer thanks for the bread & cup of remembrance

(we pass the unleavened bread, dip our individual piece in the cup and partake together remembering our Lord)

Offering our thanks unto God for this meal.



Thanksgiving

Songs of Thanksgiving

#1

We Gather Together

1. We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing;
He chastens and hastens His will to make known;
The wicked oppressing now cease from distressing;
Sing praises to His name; He forgets not His own.
2. We all do extol Thee, Thou Leader triumphant,
And pray that Thou still our Defender wilt be,
Let Thy congregation escape tribulation:
Thy name be ever praised; O Lord, make us free!

#2

Count Your Blessings

3. When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings – name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

(chorus)

*Count your blessings, name them one by one;
Count your blessings, see what God has done,
Count your blessings, name them one by one;
Count your many blessings, see what God has done.*

2. Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings; every doubt will fly,
And you will be singing as the days go by.
3. So amid the conflict, whether great or small,
Do not be discouraged; God is over all.
Count your many blessings; angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

#3

Jesus, We Just Want to Thank You

1. Jesus, we just want to thank You, *(repeat twice more)*
Thank You for being so good.
2. Jesus, we just want to praise You, *(repeat twice more)*
Praise You for being so good.
3. Savior, we just want to serve You, *(repeat twice more)*
Serve You for being so good, *(repeat twice more)*
4. Jesus, we know You are coming, *(repeat twice more)*
Take us to live in Your home.

#4

The Doxology

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below.
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. A-men.



Who are we?

We are a Bible-based, a nondenominational Bible-based, Christ-centered ministry offering material on various subjects of interest especially to Biblical Christians. We do not always take the most popular stands on issues. However it is our purpose to wet people's appetites to dig deeper into whatever subject is being discussed. We invite your inquiry.

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a.k.a. Strawberry Views

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