

MONDAY MANNA

21 November 2016

TIME FOR BEING THANKFUL – AND WHY I AM

By Jim Mathis

We are in the midst of another Thanksgiving season, when people in many parts of the world pause from their hectic, demanding work schedules to consider reasons for being thankful. Thinking over my life and career, I have compiled a list of reasons for why I feel thankful:

- I am thankful that I was born in a place and time when education was valued and I had an opportunity to learn and develop a desire for life-long learning.
- I am thankful that I was born into a family that instilled a desire to seize every opportunity to experience life.
- I am thankful for parents that took me to church and allowed me to learn firsthand about God's love, forgiveness, and what living in community was all about.
- I am thankful I learned to love all, serve all, and hate no one.
- I am thankful for a wonderful, beautiful and caring wife who has been my best friend for 46 years.
- I am thankful for the gift of music, not only for my limited singing and playing skills, but also the community of musicians I have the opportunity to know through church music, various bands, and jam sessions in all genres and styles of music.
- I am thankful for the gift of photography and growing up looking at photographs in magazines, dreaming of someday going to those places and making beautiful photographs like the ones I saw in the magazines.
- I am thankful that I can travel and enjoy the people and places that God created.
- I am thankful that I am not rich, lest I become arrogant and boastful.
- I am thankful I was not born into a rich family lest I develop an attitude of entitlement.
- I am thankful I am not poor so I do not have to beg or be dependent on the generosity of others for my daily needs.
- I am thankful I was not born into a poor family so I did not grow up with the attitude that I was a victim of society.
- I am thankful that I live in a country that has mercy and compassion and is willing to help those in need, both through governmental and private and non-profit organisations.
- I am thankful that my parents did not tell me to not talk to strangers, to clean my plate, or that working hard was the key to success. Instead they taught me how to talk to everybody, eat healthy, and be creative and smart so I wouldn't have to work so hard.
- I am thankful for friends from all social economic levels and faith backgrounds.
- I am thankful for my Evangelical, Protestant, Catholic, Pentecostal, and Mormon friends, as well as my Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu friends.
- I am thankful for the two groups of men I meet with for Bible study on Tuesdays and Fridays and the way they inspire, encourage and motivate me.
- I am thankful that I am a follower of Jesus Christ and that I can still have friends who have other beliefs.
- I am thankful that God made me just like I am and that I do not have to try to be anybody else.

If you were to draft a similar list of things for which you are thankful, what would they be?

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Not all nations around the world observe a formal “Thanksgiving Day.” However, do you think setting aside a specific day for feeling and expressing thankfulness is a good idea? Why or why not?
2. On Mr. Mathis’ list of things for which he is thankful, which of them can you relate to the most? Which, if any, would not appear on your own list of things for which you feel thankful? Explain your answer.
3. In 5 Thessalonians 5:18, we are told, “give thanks in all circumstances....” Another translation says, “In everything give thanks....” How do you respond to this biblical admonition?
4. What are you facing at present that make it difficult for you to feel thankful? What difference do you think would it make if you wilfully chose to give thanks to God even for challenges or adverse circumstances?

NOTE:

If you would like to look at or discuss other portions of the Bible that relate to this topic, consider the following brief sampling of passages:

- Psalm 95:1-2,
- Psalms 100:4-5;
- Philippians 4:6-7;
- 2 Corinthians 4:15;
- 1 Timothy 4:4;
- James 1:2-4

Jim Mathis is the owner of a photography studio in Overland Park, Kansas, specialising in executive, commercial and theatrical portraits, and operates a school of photography. He formerly was a coffee shop manager and executive director of CBMC in Kansas City, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri.