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P R E A C H E D I N

The Third Presbyterian Church,

PITTSBURGH, PA.

ON THANKSGIVING DAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1857.

B Y

REV. MELANCTHON W. JACOBUS, D. D.

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PITTSBURGH, December 2, 1857.

REV. M. W. JACOBUS, D. D.

DEAR SIR: We desire you to furnish us, for publication, a copy of the excellent and appropriate Sermon preached by you, on Thanksgiving Day, in the Third Presbyterian Church of this city. We make this request on behalf of the Congregation, whom you will oblige by a compliance therewith.

Very respectfully yours,

DANIEL BUSHNELL,  
L. R. LIVINGSTON,  
GEO. ALBREE,  
GEO. BREED,  
ALEXANDER GORDON,  
H. W. WILLIAMS,  
L. WILCOX,  
JOHN B. SEMPLE,  
WM. THAW.

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ALLEGHENY, December 5, 1857.

GENTLEMEN:

I do not feel quite at liberty to withhold the Discourse which you are kind enough to request for publication. It is herewith placed at your disposal.

Yours, truly,

M. W. JACOBUS.

TO MESSRS. DANIEL BUSHNELL, L. R. LIVINGSTON, GEO. ALBREE, GEO. BREED, ALEX. GORDON, Hon. H. W. WILLIAMS, &c. &c.

S E R M O N .

“I SAID IN MY HASTE, ALL MEN ARE LIARS. WHAT SHALL I RENDER UNTO THE LORD FOR ALL HIS BENEFITS TOWARD ME?”

Psalm 116: 11, 12.

THE great idea of an annual, public thanksgiving to God, had its origin in the Divine appointment. Our fathers borrowed it from those Pilgrim Fathers of the ancient East, who traversed the dreary wilderness under Moses and Joshua to their promised land. And we, in this land of promise, are only in danger of losing the sacred associations and warrants of such an institution. Abstracted from its first intent and high religious import, it becomes a *holiday* instead of a *holy day*, and it results in *self-glorification* rather than in grateful thanksgiving to God. It were worthy of inquiry, how far the day has been made the occasion among us of haughty and empty self-gratulation—wherein our vast domain, our immense material resources, our free institutions, and our national strength, have been made the topics of a vain and self-sufficient boast—with thanks to our fathers or ourselves, rather than to God. “Is not this great Babylon which we have built?” Let us come back again to the first principles. Long ago, as at Sinai, it was commanded as a perpetual

ordinance, "Ye shall observe the feast of ingathering at the year's end." And when the covenant people had entered the promised land, they were to gather in the redundant products, and give thanks for the fruitage and the vintage, and call the feast the Feast of Tabernacles, to remember humbly, amidst all those bounties, how they once dwelt in tents in the wilderness. It became thus a day of national memorial, as well as of annual acknowledgment for the harvest. And it was fixed at this same autumnal season of the year.

The three great yearly festivals of Israel were all connected with the harvest. The first was the *Passover*—in March and April—which saw the crops just ripening on the soil. The second was the *Pentecost*, the fiftieth day after, when the harvest was ripe. And the third was the *Tabernacles*, in October, when it was all gathered in—and when Israel kept a feast of gratitude for the fruitage and the vintage. At the first festival, on the day after the Passover Sabbath, a sheaf of the *first fruits*—the first ripe stalks of the barley harvest—was gathered and waved in acknowledgment before Jehovah, and accompanied with a burnt-offering. Till this sheaf was presented, neither bread, nor parched corn, nor full ripe ears of the harvest, could be eaten. And so a grateful thanksgiving for the crops as they stood yet on the soil, was coupled with all that was joyous in the Passover, as typical of Christ crucified. The second festival, the Pentecost, came on when the first fruits from the wheat harvest had been safely stored; and on this occasion, *two loaves of bread*, made from the new grain, were presented and waved before Jehovah, as a specimen of the product actually turned

into food and prepared for use. All this was also beautifully symbolical of the great Christian harvesting; for it was at the Passover that CHRIST JESUS, dying and rising, was waved before God, as the *first fruits* of a great harvest of souls. And at the Pentecost there was the *specimen ingathering* of people, out of all nations under heaven, in token of what it shall be when "a great multitude, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, shall be gathered into the kingdom of Christ," as the glorious harvesting of the redeemed. But the third and concluding festival of the year was at this autumnal season—a time of rejoicing and praise to God for crowning the year with His bounty. None were to come empty-handed, and every one was to rejoice before Jehovah with his family, the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and widows. And the great spiritual feast of Tabernacles, which is only symbolized thus, has yet to come, when all "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads."

It was thus publicly and repeatedly that that covenant people, thronging from north and south, and east and west, to Jerusalem and the Temple, were charged to recognize and bless God as guardian of the year. And surely such an ordinance was based on great moral principles of universal obligation. Even the heathen mythology had its worship for the Goddess of Flowers, and the Goddess of Fruits, and the Goddess of Grain. And it was the *cornucopiæ*, emptied by their divinities upon the world, that poured forth from its ample stores all the various products of the earth. So they peopled the fields with spirits; they found divinities lurking in the blossoms, nestling in the

grain, giving their hue to the blushing fruits, and hiding among the purple clusters; dwelling even in the bud and under the leaf, and guarding the seed in the earth.

How striking, that we have a land that answers so to the inspired descriptions of the land of promise—even more exactly than the old Canaan itself. “A land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil-olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.” Deut. 8.

The great idea, then, of this occasion, in which nineteen States, north and south, and east and west, associate, is that we render thanks to God for the harvests. Here is just where we, of the cities, are most prone to forget God. Because we have turned the farms into paved streets, and planted warehouses upon them, until some of us never see the seed growing or the grain waving on the fields, we almost forget, amidst our commerce, how our crops are at the basis of our prosperity. But reflect a moment. It is not even our iron and coal with which a good God has stored our hills for a resource to after ages, that are half so important to our national wealth as our great staples. What is looked to as the chief item in our foreign advices, at which the market trembles, and where a ha’penny rise or fall makes millions of difference in the national resources? Its transmission regulates our exchanges—keeps the specie in our vaults—gives circulation to credits and goods all over the land. And it is the rich produce, and

the fair prices, that are at the bottom of thrift in all our mechanical, commercial and industrial pursuits. Just think a moment, if these harvests had failed us this year—if God had withholden His bounty in such a financial crisis—how a tenfold greater suffering would have desolated the land, how your business would have been more utterly paralyzed, and your banks would have hopelessly failed, and energy and industry would have been crippled without prospect of any speedy recovery. And just here at this *fountain-head* of your mercies, you meet the Great Giver of all good, and must own Him as the dispenser of your blessings. You are doing business on this capital which God advances you from year to year. Your millions of circulating medium turn annually on the great question, whether the seed comes well out of the ground, and whether God sends forth his Spirit again as He is wont, and reneweth the face of the earth. And to-day, for this very reason, we ought to be the most grateful people in the world. God has seemed to have given command to the fields, the past year, to do their utmost for us—with no sun to scorch, and no blight to come upon the stalk. There never was such an ingathering in the history of this land. In the last year, ending June 30th, 1856, there was a total of breadstuffs and provisions exported of over seventy-seven millions of dollars, and less than thirty-nine millions the year previous—nearly *doubled* the last year. There was for the same period, an export of cotton, of one hundred and twenty-eight and a half millions of dollars, against eighty-eight millions the year previous. And the grand total of *exports* from all sources, exclusive of specie, was two hundred and sixty-

six and a half millions of dollars. But our *imports*, for the same period, were TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY-FIVE AND A HALF MILLIONS—about thirty millions excess of imports above exports. From the beginning of the Government, we have imported eight hundred millions more than we have exported. And since 1821, we have exported one hundred and forty-three millions of the precious metals more than we have imported. I regard it, then, that God has given us the immense crops of this season, to obviate, so far, the serious consequences of our own folly. He has given us extravagant harvests, just to keep us from being utterly crushed under the millstone of our own extravagant expenditure. And yet some are this day withholding their thanks to God, because trouble of our own making is upon us.

Let it, then, be distinctly and publicly acknowledged here, that God has *done well his part toward us*. The Lord is good. If there are calamities in the financial world—if commerce is embarrassed—if confidence is shaken to its very centre—*who hath done it? What is the matter? What have we done with God's gifts?* How happens it, that with the most unparalleled lavishing upon us of all the material resources from the lap of God's bounty, there is all this revulsion and catastrophe? Whence cometh all this cry of want from so many thousands of operatives suddenly thrown out of employ, and from the drying up of so many channels of industry and trade in the land? Is it from the pestilence stalking among us? No! Is it from war? No! Is it from famine? No! Is it from the rot in our fields, or the drought, or the blight upon our great staples? No, no, no! Does not God, into whose

ears this cry of destitution comes up, point to the exuberant bounty which His good hand has lavished; and does He not call upon the heavens and the earth, the mountains and the valleys, to bear Him witness that this is none of His doing? We shall not properly estimate our grounds of thanksgiving, unless we take account of this fact—that God has done nothing toward us but good, and that all our troubles have been of our own procuring. Some have even quarreled with any such appointment as this of thanksgiving at this time, when there seems so much distress around us calling for lamentation.

*But let us consider.* There was never a year of such immense crops in all sections of the land. But there never was a time, perhaps, when enormous and unprincipled speculation has so contrived to stop the food on the way from the field to the consumer, and to lay exorbitant tariffs upon it, and to make it so scarce and costly to the people, at the very time when God is giving it in such unparalleled plenty. Witness the great SUGAR speculation. At this moment the storehouses and granaries of the land are crowded, till they groan under the burden of this year's produce. And yet it is stayed on its way to the great markets, and why? For lack of confidence! Confidence in whom? In fellow men. And why? Because they have proved *liars!* Because men of high standing and of unblemished repute have shown themselves utterly rotten at heart—unworthy to be trusted even by the widow and the orphan. Is this to be laid to God's account? Is it at all of his procuring? Whoever trusted in HIM and was disappointed? How is it that He cannot, now-a-days, any way, give us such a plenty from the overloaded earth,

but combinations of traffickers will manage to keep up *famine prices*, and farmers themselves will hold it back, and let it rot, in hope of better markets? And this, even with the necessaries of life! All this from a greed of riches—from hasting to be rich, no matter at what cost, no matter by what gross and grievous abuse of God's bounties. And now I ask, if there were no such gigantic corruptions in the mercantile world—if there were no such high-handed deceptions and impositions as to destroy confidence—if there had been no such stupendous perversions of monetary trust as have astounded the public—if our own greed of gain had not tangled, and involved, and complicated our affairs, what would have hindered a most universal prosperity? But God's good gifts have rather served to madden the people with the lust of wealth, and lawful enterprise has run into the most extravagant and corrupt scheming, to get riches without any equivalents rendered, to set up fancy corporations and issue false stocks, and practise the most enormous frauds upon the unsuspecting. And the very magnitude of the scale on which God has operated to prosper and bless us, has set men wild with their barter and transfers, until the most fictitious values have taken the place of the true; and until many a counting room has been turned into a *gambling shop* as really as though all the apparatus of the gambler were used there! And all this from a widespread CUPIDITY that is not content with God's large bounties, but rather uses them as the *stakes* in a great *game*, for winning or losing at a venture. Shame! Shame! that there should be a single cry of want amidst such lavish abundance!

And besides all this, our enormous and universal

EXTRAVAGANCE has plainly enough brought this mischief upon us. What though our harvests have been so immense, we have coveted all the fineries and luxuries of foreign markets, until, like a spendthrift son, we have squandered the bulk of our yearly patrimony upon indulgence. For the first nine months of this year, we have imported no less than *one hundred and ninety-two and a half millions* of goods, some fourteen millions more than last year for the same period. And this, too, against fifty-five millions of exports, exclusive of gold, making a total of *one hundred and thirty-seven and a half millions* of indebtedness to be paid for in our specie and our produce; sending the gold of our mines and of our currency out of the country, and appropriating so much of our crops to pay such an excessive debt. It is a striking fact in this connexion, that the consumption of silk and silk goods in the United States, in 1856, amounted to over *thirty millions* of dollars, against seventeen millions in 1850, and eleven and a half millions in 1847—nearly *doubling* in the last seven years, and nearly *trebling* in the last ten years. God will work no miracles to save us from the proper results of our own wanton and reckless extravagance. Are we then to withhold our thanksgivings, because the legitimate fruits of our own pride and ostentation are overtaking us? Notwithstanding all our vain and wild expansion, and the consequent explosion, there is left in the country a solid basis of two hundred and ninety millions of the precious metals, which no revulsions can depreciate. And there is left a host of good men and true in all the departments of professional and mercantile life. And there is left a buoyancy and elasticity that can bend to circumstances:

that can wonderfully go down and come up again! All is not *gone*, as some would have it! We may bless God for this! But we are bound to be all the more thankful for such abounding mercies *amidst such abounding iniquities*. This is the aspect of our present affairs which should provoke our very special and humble thanks. "I said in my haste, *All men are liars*. What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?"

And now, consider that there is an important sense in which God has brought these temporal reverses upon us, as the proper rebuke and punishment of our misdoing. He has allowed them to come on, and for a kind purpose. And however you may regard it as a questionable item for thanksgiving, we are verily bound to give thanks to-day that this revulsion has not longer been delayed. It would have been no kindness in God to have kept back these troubles beyond their natural crisis. The catastrophe would only have been far worse at last. What if all this corruption and speculation had gone on unexposed for a season longer, how much deeper and more widespread would have been the distress when it should come? How many more would have been enticed away from the paths of truth and honesty—how many more would have been carried off by vain and crazy schemes of gaining wealth, and how many more would have been drawn into the mad vortex of cupidity and extravagance, to their ruin! Now, we wonder at ourselves that we could ever have been so deluded—that our experience and better judgment could so sadly have failed us, and that we could so readily yield to the passion of the hour! How many have already laid up the teaching as a salutary lesson for the future!

How many worldly Christians, who were far gone in the infatuation, have loathed themselves, and repented in dust and ashes that they should so have "forsaken God, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out to themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water!"

See how, in the presence of all this sudden destitution—no work for the laborer, no money for the merchant, no credit for the tradesman, no market for the manufacturer, and thousands thrown upon the world's cold charities—see how God has tempered the season so remarkably, until just now almost the first severity of the winter is upon us, and this rather to make an urgent appeal for the poor. We are fain to ask, What could He have done to us more kindly than He has done?

And if God seems to have blown upon the work of our hands, and allowed the Missions we had established to be swept away at a stroke, we can plainly see how it has come from the lying hypocrisy of a company who would grasp the treasures of India, regardless of the souls whom they were bound to protect. We can see how it has been partly, too, from our own fault; that we had not given more freely to Christianize that people while the way was open. And we can see, too, how all this overturning is likely to sweep away the abominations of the East India Company and of Mohammedanism together, and to open a clear path for Christianity.

But what shall we render unto the Lord for all *His* benefits toward us? In the face of all our pride, and ingratitude, and extravagance, and cupidity, God is blessing us with PEACE. We wonder that he has not smitten us with war. This surely is an item to be estimated as

of special value at this present juncture. What if amidst our self-imposed burdens, we had now some Crimean or India campaign to provide for, with an immense drain upon the public treasury and a frightful sacrifice of men? Why are we, at this day, favored above the Mother country in this particular? I know that already, on the Western frontier, such a calamity is staring us in the face. But for this, also, we may thank ourselves. Our own slack, irreligious policy has allowed the Mormon rebellion to strengthen and fortify itself. It has taken us years to decide whether such a high-handed outrage upon the laws of God and man ought not to be *tolerated*, on the broad ground of religious liberty! But if it is part of a man's religion to offer widows on the funeral pile—or immolate children to Moloch—or put a Protestant to death—or openly to desecrate the Sabbath—or otherwise, by *polygamy*, for example, to violate and undermine the whole social system, is this to be tolerated on the ground of religious freedom? *Never! never!* A timely declaration to this effect might have spared us. God grants us *peace*. If we are to have this Mormon war, we have shamefully brought it upon ourselves. No nation is so free as ours to cultivate all the arts of peace, and to go on in a steady career of social and material prosperity as this nation—separated as we are from the belligerent kingdoms, and not bound to embroil ourselves in their disputes—able to flourish without foreign conquest, and able to demand and insist upon our national rights. The old nations find it their great interest to cultivate peaceful relations with us. We stand in no dread of foreign invasion; but foreign ambassadors come to our Capitol to-day to conciliate our

kind understandings. We bless God for this. Often this blessing of peace has seemed to be pressed upon us by the Divine hand, almost in spite of ourselves—not secured by foreign diplomatists, but granted us by God in spite of them. “He giveth peace in all thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. He hath not dealt so with any nation, and as for His judgments, we have not known them. Praise ye the Lord.”

And has not God signally blessed us the year past with that other great element of national prosperity, I mean the general HEALTH. We wonder that he has not rebuked us with plagues. But those fearful scourges which sometimes desolate us, have been averted. The Southern cities have not had their common share of the fever, nor the Northern cities of the cholera. And we have dwelt here in our interior climate, distinguished for the uniform healthfulness.

“*God is good, and doeth good; and His tender mercies are over all His works.*” HE more than keeps His promises. “Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.”

But we are bound especially to be thankful to God for that crowning blessing, of which all others are rather a type and shadow; I mean THE RELIGION OF JESUS CHRIST—our Protestant Christianity. Such a day of glad and grateful observance is at the dictate of this religion. We have seen, amidst the agitations of the world, how plainly all good government—all sound institutions—all peace and prosperity, have had their source in the simplicity and purity of this religion. The Christian Sabbath in a land is a national blessing beyond all estimate. Why are the two great nations of the world the Christian nations?

Where is Egypt, the seat of ancient learning? She is under the millstone of Mohammedanism! Where are the ancient commercial cities, Tyre and Sidon, with all their vast wealth, and their merchant princes, and their traffic in the treasures of the Indies? They have withered away under the published interdicts of God. What makes Spain so degraded, and France so volcanic, and Russia so barbarous, and Italy, the ancient mistress of the world, so debased, but their perversion and abuse of this religion? Why is it that all Asia lies stagnant and dead, where once were Nineveh, and Babylon, and Sheba, and Cush, and Damascus?—all Africa, where were Carthage and the populous No? Why—except that they have not this religion of Christ? The Pyramids, those piles of stone over the tombs of kings, stand a monumental symbol of their glory.

And now, while we are profoundly impressed with a sense of human falsity, *let each of us ask, in the contrast, What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward ME?* Beware lest the PUBLIC thanksgiving service shall be instead of any private and personal thanks. See to it that we sit down to a fair and faithful computation of His mercies to ourselves. Come now to the utmost privacies of your own life, the year past. For everything better in your situation than the blackness of darkness for ever, which we all deserve, you are bound to thank God. If He has raised up for you any new friendship—if He has opened to you any fresh fountain of pleasure in this wilderness—if He has thrown any new charm around your home—if He has distinguished you from your neighbor by some greater sorrow poured into his cup, or by some

greater blessing mingled with your own, God asks of you the pleasant and uncostly sacrifice of praise. This is the offering which He seeks more than of lamb or bullock from your folds and herds. For if the hearty thanks shall be rendered, then no offering of material resources will be held back. Your gifts and labors, to be acceptable to Him, must come at the prompting of a filial gratitude. They will be valued only as they are the lively, earnest, practical expressions of your praise.

If *men* have proved faithless to you, and you have lost your possessions, you have *one fast friend* who cannot fail you, and who has said, "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but *they that seek the Lord* shall not want any good thing." "No good thing will *He withhold from them that walk uprightly.*" If you have any true friends left among the faithless, and if you have spared to you the means of obtaining an honest livelihood, this is matter for thanksgiving to God. But if every earthly treasure, and helper, and resource, were torn from you, and you have only *God* for your portion, you have "ALL THINGS YOURS,"—"the world, life, death, things present, things to come,"—for all time and all eternity! You may worry, and fret, and complain against Him that you have lost so much. But you have lost nothing which you had not first gained at His hand. And others have lost *more*.

And have you then nothing for which to be thankful to God? Have you good health, or even freedom from pain? Then you are richer than many a millionaire who has not the health to enjoy his possessions. Have you a sympathizing heart? Then you are happier than the grasping miser, even though you have but a copper to give to

another. Have you your reason—your hearing—your eye-sight—the use of your limbs? Thank God! Have you an unsullied name? Have you a home? Have you fond parents, kind children, partner, sister, brother, whose presence cheers you—whose counsel is balm to your soul? Have you a position in society, and a place in the Church, which the grasping deceiver has lost? Have you a sphere of usefulness, and any heart to fill it, and any pleasure in it? Have you been raised up out of any sickness—or delivered out of any peril, in person or estate, the year past—or, have you been shielded both from severe sickness and from imminent peril even, so that you have not known what it was to be in any such sore straits since your last public thanksgiving day? Then praise God for that.

Have you your daily bread, as yet—though you may not know where it is to come from to-morrow? Thank God for his common daily bounties. You take no account of them, because they flow to you in such an unbroken stream. Is it nothing that you have water to drink—without which you would soon thirst to death? Is it nothing that your hills all around you are full of coal, to defy the severities of the winter? God's air to breathe, unmixed with malaria and pestilence, is a bounty that you cannot estimate, unless it were for a moment cut off or poisoned.

Has God so distinguished any of you, that amidst the general revulsion you have your income unreduced, or nearly so, and feel little or no pressure or anxiety? Then He has opened to you a sphere of special service—has made a loud call upon you for giving and for thanks-

giving, and for self-sacrificing work. Let us see how you will fulfill your pleasant stewardship.

And if your heart yearns now for some opportunity of expressing your lively gratitude appropriately, remember there is a way of lending to the Lord. It is now within your reach. It is by giving to the poor. God advertises the loan. *Will you take it?* There is a way of washing the Master's feet. You can do it to-day. It is by washing the feet of His needy people. His brethren are among the destitute! And you can furnish a coat to His back and shoes for His feet, by clothing the nakedness of His children. You can give Him many a meal, and give Him drink in many a thirst, by doing it to one of the least of these His brethren who are in want. Oh, it is hard to be poor. He knew it by experience. He wrought a majestic miracle, on two occasions, just in order to feed the famishing thousands. But He did not work the miracle until first He had commanded His disciples, "*Give ye them to eat!*"—nay, until first He had called for all they had among them, as the basis upon which to do His miraculous work. Bless God for the opportunity of helping some of the thousands who, on the threshold of this winter, know not how they, and those dependent on them, can be fed. And what you give thus, in His name, He will recognize as LOANED TO HIM—and He will pay it back with largest interest, as He has promised.

And now let us join in the glad thanksgiving with the millions of our land, for the blessing of Moses that has come upon our wide domain—"for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the

sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth, and fulness thereof; and for the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren."