

NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD! 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Int: In their first bitter winter (1620-1621) in Plymouth, Massachusetts, half the Pilgrims died and food got so scarce each colonist had only five kernels of grain for his daily ration. When spring came there was some talk of returning to England with the crew of the *Mayflower* but all the Pilgrims decided to stay. Friendly Indians taught them to grow crops and in the fall they gathered a bountiful harvest. On the first anniversary of their landing in the New World they chose to mark it with a day of thanksgiving. There was much to mourn but there was more to appreciate. Their three-day celebration became our annual national holiday.

In early New England it became a custom at Thanksgiving to place five kernels of corn at each plate as a reminder of the desperate days of the first winter when food ran so short. The Pilgrim fathers wanted their children to remember the sacrifice made to settle as free people in a free land.

I hold five kernels of corn that remind me of some things for which I owe God thanks. Let a kernel stand for

THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED

God let me be born. He let me be born in America. And he let me be born again by his grace. I owe him thanks for the family I was born into, the family he has given me, and my church family. Over the years he has provided richly for me and given me great privileges and opportunities. I thank God!

THINGS THAT ARE HAPPENING

No one has to *feel* thankful to give thanks. There is always something to be thankful for. If a person cannot immediately identify things he can offer thanks for, let him *think*. The two words are related. Only the thoughtless are thankless! I thank God!

THINGS THAT HAVE NOT HAPPENED

Instead of complaining about how bad things are, I can thank God that it is not worse! No one robbed me. No one shot me. No one fired me. No truck rear-ended me. My transmission did not go out. My wife did not leave me. I thank God!

THINGS THAT WILL NOT HAPPEN

I will never be left alone (Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5-6).
I will never lose my place in the family of God (John 6:37).
I will never go to hell (though I deserve to go there) (John 5:24).
These are blessings that belong only to believers.
I thank God!

THINGS THAT WILL HAPPEN

Jesus will come (John 1:2).
Believers who have died will rise (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), living believers will be transformed (1 Corinthians 15:51-52), and every believer will spend eternity with Jesus.

These blessings also belong to believers only.
I thank God!

