



# The Wonder Springs Chronicle

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## The Wonder Springs Chronicle

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## Grace in Winter

Tomorrow here in the United States we celebrate our Thanksgiving holiday, originally set aside to commemorate the blessings of the Creator towards Christian Pilgrims in the Massachusetts colony almost 500 years ago.

A lot has changed in those half millennia for sure. The Pilgrims basically came to these shores to flee established religious persecution in Europe and to build a new life for their families. To face the unknowns of sea and the new lands across the Atlantic required deep faith, which is generally absent in America and the rest of the world today.

We want it easy, with immediate gratification, or we find other things to do with our time, like nothing of much importance, even temporally. Things of eternal significance are pretty much undefined for the mass of people. However people are still changed by faith, sometimes their own, but many times there are other people which we do not at this time know personally, that are truly

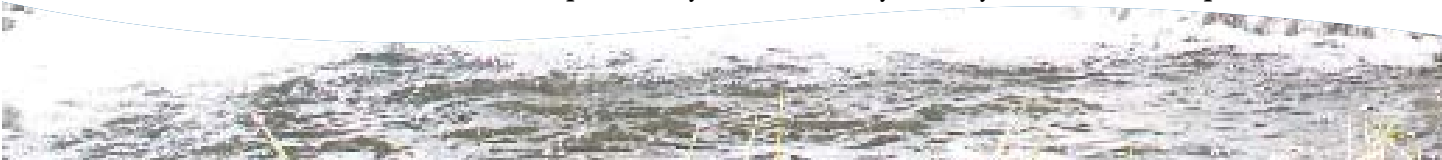
responsible for our life changing pilgrimage.

Early last Sunday morning I had a dream in which family members, some alive, some passed, were having a reunion of sorts. I was sitting on the front porch talking to someone about something, when a person who has had a very dramatic effect upon my life came out the door behind me and sat on the grass and asked, "What am I doing here?"

My immediate response was something really not at all profound, which was answered in another brief, but equally pedantic statement from the person now relaxed and feeling at home on the lawn. Then I woke up, with the thought, where does this conversation go from here?

"Well you are an inspiration of my life, whether you know it or not. In fact, when things get really tough and I wonder why I can do this work at all, eventually you come to mind."

A pretty heavy thought to lay upon someone with whom you have never spoken with



personally before. To which the proper and I believe most common response would be, “When and how did I do that for you?”

“Of course, if the truth is laid out, it probably occurred too many times to count, in situations really too complex perhaps for you to bear, but you were there along side in the hard times, and it really cost you nothing towards me. At the same time you probably deserve a substantial part of any reward. All you did, was be you, and that was more than enough.”

Perhaps the best and Biblical response comes from Matthew 25:33 40 in the sheep and the goats parable:

*And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’*

*“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’*

In our modern world, these blessings may come from a world away, all the way to right next door. We really have no idea, the effects we have on other people’s lives, many times quite profound, way beyond our knowledge, good or bad, probably most of the time for our personal eternal good.

So what is the inspiration that I get from this particular, unique, and unnamed person?

I would like to think this is a ministry of God’s common grace, empowered by deep underlying Christian principles. It is not church work in the specific sense, but we surely could debate that issue. They write books on church work, they have Bible schools, and even seminaries on church work, but this type of ministry is pretty much all application, application on the fly.

I would categorize the ministry of this person exactly in the same light. Uniquely different,

but still that same thought of taking your Christian faith and trying to make it relevant to someone who might be religious or someone who has absolutely no Christian faith knowledge at all. Essentially the emphasis is not on making converts to Christianity, but to spading fallow ground and planting seeds, in fertile soils of human personalities, created before time began.

In theological terms this is converting specific revelation into the common, so that God can use that trail to change the common into the specific revelation of the Christian gospel. To put it into the context of Narnia, which we have been utilizing the last couple of weeks, these types of ministries are really ministries of “deep magic from before the beginning of time.” Consequently, these ministers have no inkling of the eternal work they are truly accomplishing. It is a job, but a job enabled and empowered, by God for broader and deeper purposes than can be grasped by current fallen human understanding.

I find it interesting that new people I meet, and also traffic on the website are basically divided into two camps, they are essentially people who hang around, and people who want to get away as soon as possible; the middle ground is quite sparse. When you think about the website specifically, to expect someone to read basically two thousand words, or more, on some specific topic is quite an accomplishment, especially in today’s world. In the established media we are given five hundred words to expound the wisdom to change the world, if we are really famous we might graduate to one thousand and expect a big pay check to come with the offering.

For my part I try to tell a story, but that is really a gift that you may utilize, the understanding of that gift is beyond my comprehension. Perhaps many years of writing technical reports and proposals helps to make these much shorter personal stories much more a pleasure. For my part I can think of at least three other personality attributes, where I think I have greater giftedness, but at least for now God has chosen the writing, and the profound training I learned essentially in the sixth grade.

This is not about me, but about when you begin to look at the world through the lens of gracefully empowered thankfulness, you find examples pretty much wherever you look. Those first Pilgrims and the other New England Puritans expressed their thankfulness to God under Calvin’s paradigm of “Guilt, Grace, and Gratitude.” I use the terms Condemnation, Adoption, and Praise, please wear

your CAP, but I am a storyteller not a formal theologian, and not a Calvinist.

So what we are doing is using three terms, thankfulness, gratitude, and praise, to essentially mean the same thing, and they find their substance in God alone, or in God's grace alone, because of Christ alone.

This does a couple of things that plain religion, even a works based Christian religion cannot accomplish. First of all, it allows this still unmet person, to be an inspiration to me for a quarter of a century. Second, it also basically empowers this person, to walk a pilgrimage path towards the destiny for which God ordained for them at creation.

As a consequence, the whole trip and things unfold, rather than according to some humanly designed plan. Therefore you can look back at life and say, "Wow! Life is really good, if you don't weaken, and when you do weaken, there an unseen strengthening hand gives me strength when I have none."

As such, that strength is a gift, which must be given away, freely!

So how is this thankfulness expressed?

Most generally and most commonly praise is expressed through music. In America probably the truest historical form is Bluegrass. Bluegrass is a mid twentieth century commercial form that combines elements of the genres of folk, gospel, and blues in an up tempo celebration of life. It originated in the Scotch Irish immigrants in the mountains of Tennessee, Kentucky, and West Virginia. With these human roots, you hence also find a Celtic influence of a form of nonconformist Christianity

Scotch Presbyterianism, or non Episcopalian Protestantism in the British Isles , somewhat quite distinct from more prevalent American Christian roots in revivalism and deism.

I have that Scotch Irish Celtic mountain heritage on my dad's side of the family. Just how that plays out I really do not know. Instead of the Blue Ridge Mountains however, my traceable roots go back to the Okanogan Highlands of Washington, via upstate New York and there back to Europe. My great grandfather and his brother homesteaded on Bannon Mountain about a century ago, when the north half of the Colville Indian Reservation was opened to homesteaders.

My dad truthfully admitted that the only way he could carry a tune was in a bucket, but in my youth I remember my two uncles and grandpa Bannon, having a musical jam session in the big country kitchen of grandpa's then home in Orient, a few miles north of my current place on Boulder Creek. I think they had a fiddle, a guitar, and a banjo and was told they all played by ear, without any formal musical training.

So thanks for stopping by, the reason you managed to find the place, in some way relates to some deep empowerment of thankfulness created in some way by the God that created everything. We all seek, more defined answers to the where and the why for, especially in the turbulent, stupendous times like these, no matter where you live in God's neck of the woods.

Then I suppose that is why these current turbulent, stupendous times were created, so we again realize that we don't have the solutions to all the affairs of life. Truth be known, we really are not as smart as we like to think. In fact, Thanksgiving is a holiday, which by definition acknowledges gracefully empowered thankfulness; because that is the only way we can positively influence other people for the common betterment of all humanity.

The stuff we try to do in our own strength quickly generates legalism and hypocrisy. So wherever you find yourself tomorrow and you find yourself humming some little tune, remember music, like what you hear aloud, or that which internally motivates you everyday to do your job a little better, really is a foretaste for the potential for eternal joy in daily things.

For time to last forever, it just seems natural that life, undeserved eternal life, demands not so much our best, because it does do that, but the recognition that in this world, we bring little, consume much, and have so little time to understand the differences.

So on Thanksgiving we make that a special day, because one day that will be the regular day, may the peace of that reality become the empowerment of your life, today, tomorrow, and as you live your days of this pilgrimage. May that Almighty God bless and enrich your existence, in which we always take too much for granted.

**Happy Thanksgiving.**