

Thanksgiving Message by
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TURN YOUR MIND TO GOD

THE Thanksgiving holiday is traditionally a time to count one's blessings with a spirit of gratitude. It is indeed a blessing that in God's Divine creation you have been given the gift of human embodiment. Your soul could have entered into any embodiment: a bird, a frog, even the luckless turkey! Imagine what life is like in the animal world. With instinct reigning supreme, there is no room for complex reasoning, for self-effort, for Divine consciousness.

As a human being you are blessed in so many ways. You can take care of the world. You can promote beauty and harmony by your good deeds. You can bring about progress in various ways. We cannot expect animals to do so; it is only the human being in this creation that has such an amazing role to play. And so give abundant thanks to God for being born as a human personality.

To be truly thankful, one must be able to utilize the gifts God has given him as a human being to his full capacity. With the help of your human body, mind, senses, and the amazing potentiality of your intellect, your soul can ascend

the heights of glory. You can attain Enlightenment. And while you are doing so, you can promote peace and harmony in the world. You can be Jesus, Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi.

On the other hand, if you do not appreciate the gifts given to you and you misuse them, you create complexes in your unconscious and live a life of insecurity, fear and bitterness. Negative karmas, thereby, bring restriction in your consciousness. Thus, one can create hell for oneself by misusing the gifts of God and create heaven for oneself by utilizing them to the fullest.

Be Thankful for Prosperity

Behind every form of prosperity there is a Divine hand. It is not by your ego that you achieve anything, but by the Divine within you. Through ego you accomplish nothing. Through God within, you are able to accomplish great things. Therefore, by developing humility you are turning to God and allowing yourself to be a recipient of greater prosperity.

One can turn to God in many ways. You can think of God, pray to God, and repeat the Divine name with a feeling of sweetness. You can perform good deeds with a sense of being an instrument in Divine Hands. You can also turn to God by developing Divine qualities within your heart. Because God is the embodiment of virtue, by being virtuous you are turning to God.

In this sense, turning to God during prosperity implies becoming humbler. As a *Vedic* saying conveys, when a tree is laden with flowers or fruit, it bends down in humility. A tree that is bereft of fruit stays arrogant, with its branches arched upward.

Prosperity that makes you vain and arrogant is not true prosperity. If you suddenly win a lottery and your head soars so high in the clouds that you reject your friends, then that is lack of thankfulness. Your prosperity has failed the Divine examination.

Human embodiment lasts only for a short time. In that short time, do not allow yourself to be sidetracked from the purpose behind that embodiment, which is the attainment of Liberation. If, during prosperity, you become vain, you are being sidetracked. Within your short lifetime you need to strive to cultivate Divine qualities such as sincerity, humility, patience, compassion, kindness. If these qualities have been developed, you enjoy mental relaxation. You live a life without stress, without worry, without anxiety, without fear, without insecurity. That is true utilization of prosperity.

There is a saying by the great poet Kabira: “Everyone remembers God during misery, but forgets Him when there is prosperity. If one were to remember God during prosperity, there would not be misery for him.”

In painful conditions everybody turns his mind to God, but the moment the misery is relieved one does not think of God anymore. God has become a means to an end.

This is illustrated by a humorous story about a farmer in India who climbed a coconut

tree with the idea of bringing down coconuts and selling them in the market. The coconut tree the farmer climbed happened to be a very tall tree, so by the time he reached the top he looked around and began to tremble at the dizzying height. He threw fifty or sixty coconuts to the ground and then began to come down. Terrified by the dangerous descent, he cried out, “Oh God, if only you will allow me to survive, I will always give all the coconuts to the nearest temple. I will not claim a single coconut.”

Then he summoned a little strength and started to slide down again. When he had come a little further, his confidence increased and he thought, “Why should I give away all the coconuts? I’ll give the temple fifty percent.” He went down a little more and thought, “Why fifty percent? God doesn’t really need to eat those things. So why not just give twenty-five percent and keep seventy-five for myself.” And by the time he reached the ground, the farmer decided not to give away any coconuts at all. He picked them all up and rushed to the nearest market to make a big sale for himself. That is just a humorous illustration of the all-too-common human tendency to approach God as a means to an egoistic end.

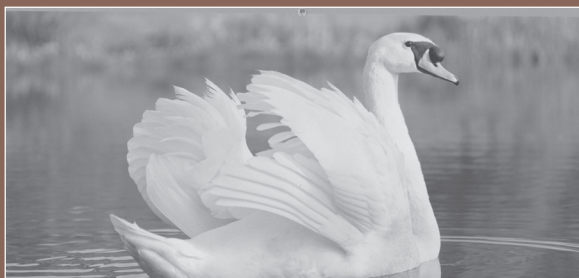
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Saint Kabira

Never forget for a moment that it is God. Who is the source of all strength and sustenance, that it is God who is responsible for the all endless miracles of human survival in the precarious universe. A human personality is so delicate. The human brain floats precariously in a little water. If only one small stone falls on a person's head, the whole world can slip from his fingers. And yet, by Divine Grace, from childhood you have gone on surviving so many dangerous situations, so many threatening predicaments. Try to remember all that and give thanks to the Divine Presence who is the instrument of all those miracles.

God should become your innermost inspiration, the fountain source of all sweetness and joy at every moment. Day by day, you should come closer and closer to God and share the Divine abundance that is expressed through the world.

Never forget for a moment that it is God Who is the source of all strength and sustenance, that it is God who is responsible for all the endless miracles of human survival in the precarious universe.



The scriptures say that the day that passes without your remembering God has been lived in vain; the ears that do not enjoy listening to the glory of God are just empty; the tongue that does not repeat the Divine Name is a frog's tongue; the eyes that do not behold the glory of God are merely hollows in your skull.

The implication behind this teaching is that a profoundly successful life is a life that turns towards its source, which is God. Life that turns away from its source is a failure. You may attain lots of things and everyone around you may say, "How prosperous he is!" But deep within your heart, if there is no peace, if your mind is filled with worries, if your body trembles with insecurity, then where is prosperity? If prosperity does not lift the load from your head, then what sort of prosperity is that? So when there is prosperity, close your doors, sit in meditation, commune with God, and enjoy the sweet presence of the Divine Self enfolding you. By doing so, you are utilizing the gift of prosperity and truly saying "thanks" to God.

Be Thankful for Adversity

You should be thankful not only for prosperity, but also for adversity, because life requires lessons from both to enrich it. If there were only prosperity there could be no spiritual advancement nor even material progress, because all forms of success require tenacity, endurance, patience, the ability to persevere. If you are not given your share of adversity, you would not develop these qualities.

How can a person thank God during adversity? By welcoming adversity as an opportunity for austerity, an opportunity for disciplining oneself. One must learn to handle adversity with patience, with the inner awareness that "Even this will pass away. I have survived so many adverse situations by the Grace of God. I will also triumph over this!"

Behind every adversity there is a purpose. If you learn to wait and watch with patience, you begin to discover that every adversity teaches you something — and that lesson makes you wiser and more relaxed than before. Adversity allows you to churn your heart and discover inner strength you did not realize you possessed.

In the Divine plan, therefore, what seems to the limited human mind to be adversity is not really adversity, and prosperity is not necessarily prosperity. If during adversity your mind turns to God in a sincere way, that is prosperity. If during prosperity your mind turns away from God, then that prosperity is actually adversity. Keeping this in view, learn to handle both prosperity and adversity with wisdom and insight.

Learn to Relax in Divine Hands

In daily life allow your mind to relax and flow towards God. Even while performing various works there should be a feeling of serenity within. If you maintain the awareness that “God is with me,” you will be free of stress and you will do things in the best way possible.

In this world, all that you can do in any given situation is to exercise your best self-effort. You cannot control the results of that effort. Having done your best, relax with a sense of inner surrender to God. By doing so, you are allowing the spirit of Thanksgiving to unfold within your heart.

In the absence of that spirit of thankfulness, the mind goes on endlessly creating imaginary fears and worries. Ninety-nine percent of human troubles are backed up by imaginary fears. In general, the actual situations we face in life are not as difficult as we imagined they would be. It is the way we prepare ourselves for our imagined future, the way we rehearse a calamity, which gives rise to most of our stress and tension.

In your plan of activity for every day, try to include those things that relax your heart and mind. Allow a short period of time in which you have nothing to think about but the Divine

within you. Visualizing God in whatever way you choose according to your faith, sit relaxed and feel the Divine Presence encompassing you. Also allow some time for studying the scriptures that direct your attention to the highest goal, God-realization.

Try to channelize your energy in such a way that you are able to do certain works that are not completely confined to selfishness, works of goodness that go beyond the needs of your ego. Further, in whatever work you do, develop a spirit of serving God through that work.

Blending these spiritual ingredients day by day will allow you to utilize the resources God has given you in the best way possible. As a result, you will enjoy inner peace, profound communion with God, and an overwhelming sense of thankfulness for the Divine gifts that express through the dazzling glory of His universe.

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