



Abraham Lincoln's Thanksgiving Proclamation A Family Reading!

I divided the Proclamation into five parts with headings making it easy to read in a gathering. I then attempted to translate it into simpler language so that I could understand it. This simpler version is at the end of this document and may be helpful to read next in the gathering or to use for discussion and prayer.

Reader 1

Abraham Lincoln's Proclamation of Thanksgiving in Washington, D.C. on October 3, 1863 written by Secretary of State William Seward 152 years ago.

By the President of the United States of America, A Proclamation.

An acknowledgement of God's presence

The year that is drawing towards its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties (which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come) others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God.

Reader 2

An acknowledgment of the reality of war

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Reader 3

Encouragement to persevere in what is good

Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle or the ship; the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battlefield; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

Reader 4

An invitation to collectively thank God

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People.

I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens.

Reader 5

A recommendation for humility, compassion and prayer

And I recommend to them that, while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States to be affixed. Done at the City of Washington, this Third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States the Eighty-eighth. By the President: Abraham Lincoln, William H. Seward, Secretary of State

By the President of the United States of America, A Proclamation. (simpler language)

Reader 1

This year has been filled with blessings so bountiful that we may forget them and fail to be aware of the watchful provision of Almighty God.

Reader 2

Even in the midst of this severe civil war, peace has been preserved with all nations, order maintained, laws respected and obeyed, and harmony prevailed everywhere except in this battle.

Reader 3

Peaceful industries have had to support this battle; but still, farming, shipping, territorial growth, and mining have yielded more abundantly than before. Population has increased even with the waste of lives in war, and we are stronger due to the expectation of increased freedom.

Reader 4

This prosperity does not come from our strength, but is the gift of the Most High God. For He could have been angry about our sins, but he has been merciful. Together, we should reverently acknowledge His mercy. Therefore, I invite us all to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our generous Father in heaven.

Reader 5

I also recommend that we do these three things:

- Repent for our national perverseness and disobedience,
- Commend those who have suffered at the hands of evil into His care.
- Fervently ask God to intervene to heal and restore our nation.

I have sealed this proclamation.