

The Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter

November/December 1985

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Thanksgiving for What Is Given

Some people are substituting "Turkey Day" for Thanksgiving. I think it must be because they are not aware that there's anybody to thank, and the most important thing about the holiday is food. Christians know there is Somebody to thank, but often when we make a list of things to thank Him for we include only things we like. A bride can't get away with that. She writes a note to everybody, not only the rich uncle who gave the couple matching BMWs, but the poor aunt who gave them a crocheted toilet-paper cover. In other words, she has to express thanks for whatever she's received.

Wouldn't that be a good thing for us to do with God? We are meant to give thanks "in everything," even if we're like the little girl who said she could think of a lot of things she'd rather have than eternal life. The mature Christian offers not just polite thanks but heartfelt thanks that springs from a far deeper source than his own pleasure. Thanksgiving is a spiritual exercise, necessary to the building of a healthy soul. It takes us out of the stuffiness of ourselves into the fresh breeze and sunlight of the will of God. The simple act of thanking Him is for most of us an abrupt change of activity, a break from work and worry, a move toward re-creation.

I am not suggesting the mouthing of foolish platitudes, or evasion of the truth. That is not how God is glorified, or souls fortified. I want to see clearly what I have been given and to thank Him with an honest heart. What are the "givens"?

Thankless children we all are, more or less, comprehending but dimly the truth of God's fathomless love for us. We do not know Him as a gracious Giver, we do not understand His

most precious gifts, or the depth of His love, the wisdom with which He has planned our lives, the price He pays to bring us to glory and fulfillment. When some petty private concern or perhaps some bad news depresses or confuses me, I am in no position to be thankful. Far from it. That is the time, precisely then, that I must begin by deliberately putting my mind on some great Realities. What are these "givens"? What do I most unshakably believe in? God the Father Almighty. Jesus Christ His only Son. The Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, the life everlasting. Not a long list, but all we need. "The necessary supplies issued to us, the standard equipment of the Christian." We didn't ask for any of them. (Imagine having nothing more than we've asked for!) They are *given*.

Take the list of whatever we're not thankful for and measure it against the mighty foundation stones of our faith. The truth of our private lives can be understood only in relation to those Realities. Some of us know very little of suffering, but we know disappointments and betrayals and losses and bitterness. Are we really meant to thank God for such things? Let's be clear about one thing: God does not *cause* all the things we don't like. But He does permit them to happen because it is in this fallen world that we humans must learn to walk by faith. He doesn't leave us to ourselves, however. He shares every step. He walked this lonesome road first, He gave Himself for us, He died for us. "Can we not trust such a God to give us, with Him, everything else that we can need?" (Rom 8:32 JBP) Those disappointments give us the chance to learn to know Him and the meaning of His gifts, and, in the midst of darkness, to receive His light. Doesn't *that* transform the not-thankful list into a thankful one?

Moonless Seas

Some of you are perhaps feeling that you are voyaging just now on a moonless sea. Uncertainty surrounds you. There seem to be no signs to follow. Perhaps you feel about to be engulfed by loneliness. There is no one to whom you can speak of your need. Amy Carmichael wrote of such a feeling when, as a missionary of twenty-six, she had to leave Japan because of health, went to China for recuperation, but soon thought God was telling her to go to Ceylon. (All this preceded her going to India, where she stayed for fifty-three years.) I have on my desk her original hand-written letter of August 25, 1894, as she was en route to Colombo. "All along, let us remember, we are not asked to understand, but simply to obey. . . . On July 28, Saturday, I sailed. We had to come on board on Friday night, and just as the tender [a small boat] where were the dear friends who had come to say goodbye was moving off, and the chill of loneliness shivered through me, like a warm love-clasp came the long-loved lines—'And only Heaven is better than to walk with Christ at midnight, over moonless seas.' I couldn't feel frightened then. Praise Him for the moonless seas—all the better the opportunity for proving Him to be indeed the El Shaddai, 'the God who is Enough.'"

Let me add my own word of witness to hers, and to that of the tens of thousands who have learned that He is indeed Enough. He is not all we would ask for (if we were honest), but it is precisely when we do not have what we would ask for, and *only then*, that we can clearly perceive His all-sufficiency. It is when the sea is moonless that the Lord has become my Light.

A Note of Thanks

Some time ago I mentioned that the Newsletter was "in the hole." Not any more. We're now breaking even. Thanks to you who have helped, some by paying for their own subscriptions, some by paying more in order to enable those who can't pay to stay on the list.

How to Stay on Our Mailing List

Hardly a week goes by without a letter from somebody saying, "For some reason I'm not getting your newsletter anymore." There is a simple explanation. After you had received five newsletters a note was sent asking whether you wished to stay on the list. If you did not return the form, your name was automatically deleted. It costs us six dollars per year per subscription. You can still get the letter without sending the money, but you can't get it without returning the form. We want to spare you one of *our* pet peeves—people put us on mailing lists we don't want to be on which are *impossible* to get off! Ours isn't.

* * *

It is His will that I should cast my cares on Him each day.
He also tells me not to cast my confidence away.

But oh, how foolishly I act, if taken unawares—I cast my confidence away, and carry all my cares.

Anon.

(1 Pt 5:7; Heb 10:35)

* * *

"All loneliness, angers, hatreds, envies and itchings. . . if rolled into one single experience and put into the scale against the least moment of the joy that is felt by the least in Heaven would have no weight that could be registered at all." C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*.

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My Mother

Some of you have written to say that you've been praying for my mother. Thank you so very much. Since she broke her hip she has needed twenty-four-hour care, and it has become clear that it is out of the question for her to leave the Quarryville Presbyterian Home. We were able to bring her here for a few days' visit in July. Her disorientation was even more marked, her anxieties exacerbated. (She kept wondering how she would get "home, wherever that is," and whether she ought to try to make "train reservations.") Nothing I said could reassure her, for the brain mechanisms for receiving new information seem to be gone. Her trouble is a common one—arteriosclerosis. When we drove her back to Pennsylvania we saw a room full of women much worse off than Mother is, and I have been pondering how God may be glorified in such lives. I don't know. I only know He loves them, He has promised that those who trust Him will bring forth fruit in old age, and the mystery of suffering was dealt with on the Cross. I think of the wonderful words of the hymn, "Crown Him with Many Crowns":

Who every grief hath known that wrings the
human breast,
And takes and bears them for His own, that all
in Him may rest.

The Diet That Works

In the last newsletter I promised to reveal the secret of my miracle diet—costs nothing, doesn't count calories, includes all sorts of food, will work for the rest of your life, etc. It's so simple (I didn't say easy) it's simply ridiculous. Just draw a line with your knife straight through the middle of each portion on your plate. Eat half of it. (If you're serving up your own portion, of course, it makes more sense just to serve up half of what you consider normal.)

If Hurt, Bless

A friend writes of problems in the church and of the tough battle she has fought with the powers of darkness as she has prayed for her husband during certain crucial church meetings. He was not the pastor but happened to be in a place of responsibility, so he bore the brunt of the troubles. "Have been reading up on blessing," she wrote. "It has been clear that Joe and I would have to bless the ones who have hurt us so badly—at least that's what I kept finding in the Word. I realized I had no idea how to bless someone. I can pray for him, commend and commit him to the Lord, forgive him, etc., but how do I 'bless' him? When Christ took up the little children to bless them it doesn't say He taught or admonished them—He blessed them. I think blessing means turning a person so that God falls upon him. . . . Blessing people faces them the right way to *perceive* God's goodness falling on them. The definition works interpersonally, too. If I bless Jill before others, I am illuminating those aspects of her character which reflect God, instead of agreeing with the whisperers."

Prayer

Give me a pure heart
that I may see Thee,
A humble heart
that I may hear Thee,
A heart of love
that I may serve Thee,
A heart of faith,
that I may abide in Thee.
(Dag Hammarskjöld)

* * *

Please pray for help as I continue to work on the biography of Amy Carmichael. Sometimes progress seems fairly rapid, at other times I feel like the wheels of the Egyptian chariots, which "drave heavily" (Ex 14:25).

Candied Grapefruit Peel

Don't throw away those rinds! Take four halves, after you've eaten the insides, and cover them with cold water. Add a tablespoon of salt, bring to boil, boil thirty minutes, drain and rinse with cold water. Scrape out the membranes (don't scrape rinds too clean), slice thinly, cover with water again, add salt, boil thirty minutes. Drain and repeat once more. In heavy skillet or Dutch oven place rinds, 2 cups sugar, ½ cup water. Cook till nearly dry. Drain in colander. Roll each piece in granulated sugar and lay on waxed paper to dry for about twenty-four hours.

Old Christmas Cards

Some missionaries want old Christmas cards to give away. If you know some of them, by all means send them yours. Another alternative to discarding the cards is to cut them into neat little gift tags for next year. Why pay \$2.00 for a packet of six gift tags when you can have them for a few minutes' work with the scissors? I cut out angels, mangers, madonnas, even reindeer and holly wreaths from the cards and use the other side for the "To _____ From _____." The blank backs of white cards I put into a box in my desk for scratch paper.

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Servant Ministries, Inc.
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Travel Schedule

November 1985/ January 1986

November 22

Cambridge, Massachusetts, Campus Crusade for Christ, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

December 6

Raleigh, North Carolina, Pregnancy Life Care Center. Melinda Delahoyde, 919-847-9715.

January 12, 1986

Chicago Sunday Evening Club, 5 P.M. WTTW, Channel 11.

January 13, 14

Auburn, Alabama, Covenant Presbyterian Church.

January 23-25

Lincoln, Nebraska, Baptist Student Union. Brett Yohn, 402-483-1451.

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