

Thankfulness

Giving Thanks - Saying Grace

Foundation

Bible passage : Matthew 26.26-27 etc.

In many religions people give thanks for the food they eat, and this is something that is common amongst Christians. In Bible times this would have been the normal custom, and perhaps it is at your school, but the gospel writers particularly mention Jesus giving thanks at some rather unusual meals.

On two occasions Jesus miraculously provided food for a very large crowd of people from a small amount of food. The first time we are told that he looked up to heaven and blessed, which is understood to mean He gave thanks to God (Matthew 14.19). The second time (15.36) Matthew uses a different word (*eucharisteo*) which means “to give thanks” and is still used by Christians. These must have been extraordinary meals to be at, demonstrating Jesus’ power over creation, and yet even so He began by giving thanks to the Father.

Another extraordinary meal was The Last Supper. The atmosphere must have been tense already from things Jesus had done beforehand, which John records in his gospel. It would have seemed normal when Jesus took the bread,

blessed and broke it, and later gave thanks for the wine. What made the meal extraordinary

was what he also said; “Take, eat; this is my body” and “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant...”. Ever since Christians have remembered this meal, as Jesus told us to do

in Communion services.

As the Apostle Paul later wrote, we proclaim Jesus’ death until He comes again, not just giving thanks for bread and wine, but that Jesus died for our salvation.

Later we find the Apostle Paul having trouble with people who said that Christians, like Jews, should not eat certain foods. In response Paul is very definite that God created food to be received with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4.3) and that “everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving” (v4). Of course, this doesn’t excuse people using what God made good for wrong which is why Paul also warned against drunkenness and gluttony. In another letter we are told not only to give thanks for food but “whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to the Father through him.” (Col 3.17).



“everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving”

Saying Grace

In English we often talk about “saying grace”. In this sense the word grace comes from the Latin *gratia* meaning thanksgiving (i.e. gratitude). This is slightly different to how the word is usually used in the Bible where grace translates the Greek *charis* meaning favour or gift.



Everything we have comes from God and many people therefore give thanks to God before they eat, just as Jesus did.