

THOUGHTS FOR THANKSGIVING

In an era not so long ago, our country was being ripped asunder by internal turmoils and differences--much as it is today.

Yet even in the midst of the darkness of civil war, Abraham Lincoln cast a ray of hope that the nation might once again have "full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquillity and Union."

We would do well to review some key thoughts of Lincoln's proclamation of October 3, 1863, which set the precedent for our national Thanksgiving holiday.

"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....

"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 ... 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 ... 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. 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 ... 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, tranquillity and Union."

As in Lincoln's day, our nation's deep wounds beg to be healed. Peace, harmony and tranquillity cry for restoration. Our moral compass pleads for calibration.

Perhaps it's time to move our Thanksgiving holiday beyond feasting, fellowship and football. Perhaps it's time to embrace Lincoln's advice to observe a "day of thanksgiving and praise ... with an attitude of humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience"?

The results might be surprising--and enduring.

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.- 2 Chronicles 7:14