



Volume 35, Number 38

October 10, 2010

The Attitude of Gratitude

Sarah Josepha Hale had a profound sense of her blessings, and she wanted everyone to share in them.

Though it was scandalous, she was the first to champion equal education for girls, start day nurseries for working women, and push for public playgrounds. She was also the first editor of America's first magazine for women.


Not only that, she persuaded President Abraham Lincoln to declare Thanksgiving a national holiday, and wrote more than 20 books and hundreds of poems, including *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, the best known nursery rhyme in the English language. And she did it all after turning 40.

When she was 34, her husband died, leaving her destitute with five small children. Sarah eked out a meagre living by sewing and writing poetry then, five years later, she wrote a very successful novel called *Northwood*. That prompted a British publisher to hire her as the first editor of *The Ladies Magazine*. Almost a decade later, she went to *Godey's Lady's Book* in Philadelphia where her many skills helped make the publication the nation's largest with 150,000 subscribers.

During this period, Sarah pushed hard for a national celebration of Thanksgiving. "We have too few holidays," she wrote. "There is a deep moral influence in these seasons of rejoicing, in which whole communities participate. They bring out [the best]... in our natures."

As Civil War drew near, Sarah hoped the spiritual aspect of Thanksgiving would prevent hostilities. She inundated national and state officials with thousands of hand-written requests for the national holiday and finally got the attention of Lincoln. He pushed through the legislation in 1863, 40 years after Sarah began her campaign. Though it





You can't beat this long distance plan: it's free, with unlimited minutes!

followers of Christ meet at
16 Morrell St., Btfd, ON, N3T 4J2
Sharing Jesus and the Journey

JOIN US!
Sunday
 Classes 10:00
 Worship 11:00
Wednesday
 Bible Study 7:00
 Phone 758-5673
www.followers.ca

didn't prevent war, it did make Americans consider their blessings amid the darkness days the nation had ever known.

Lincoln wrote of those blessings, "No human counsel hath devised... these things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered us in mercy." As for Sarah Hale, she wrote and edited until she was 89 and died at a robust 91.

If there's one thing above all else we can learn from her, it's the value of gratitude. "*Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father who created all the lights of heaven,*" writes James. And not just our material blessings, but our spiritual ones, too, including salvation — new birth. "*He chose to give birth to us by giving us his true word and we, out of all creation, became his prized possession.*" (James 1:17,18)

He loves and blesses us and, in return, simply asks for love and gratitude expressed through worship and service to others. And like a fragrant flower that leaves its scent on our hands when we give it to another, gratitude has great therapeutic value for us.

When discussing the struggles of life, the apostle Paul tells us to combine our requests to God with an attitude of gratitude. "*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything,*" he says. "*Tell God what you need and thank him for all he's done. Then you will experience God's peace, which far exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*" (Phil. 4:6,7)

When we combat anxiety with prayer and appreciation, it leads to peace of mind. Why? Because recognition of what God has already given us brings balance and perspective. Things don't seem entirely black when we remember our blessings. This guards our hearts from bitterness and resentment, and our minds from despair, depression and desperation. It also makes us more able to trust God. When we recall how he delivered us in the past, it gives us confidence he'll do it again.

Thanksgiving, when it's a daily celebration, does bring out the best in our natures. It makes it easier for us to reach through the pain to serve others when we see that many are far worse off than ourselves. Besides, Mary had a little Lamb and he grew up to give his life for you. For that reason alone, you should emphasize the 'I' in gratitude.