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*“O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.”  
Psalm 135:1*

Thanksgiving is a uniquely American holiday, with a history of celebrations and proclamations that offer gratitude to the Lord for His blessings and benefits to our country. The many [Thanksgiving celebrations and proclamations in our nation’s history](#) demonstrate that showing gratitude for God’s goodness was a key part of the founding and growth of our country. The history of Thanksgiving also reveals the enduring principle that offering gratitude to the Lord often yields way to bringing hope, even in trying times. During intensely difficult challenges in our country, historical leaders have often offered hope to the country by encouraging gratitude to God for His blessings.

One such [Thanksgiving Proclamation](#) was issued by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863, during the Civil War. Shortly after the Battle of Gettysburg, President Lincoln visited the field and later testified that “when I went to Gettysburg and saw the graves of thousands of our soldiers, I then and there consecrated myself to Christ.” He then issued a Thanksgiving Proclamation which acknowledged God’s sovereignty, God’s blessings and benefits in the midst of war, and God’s mercy. The proclamation then called on people to offer “humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience,” to pray for those suffering as a result of the war, and to “ferently 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.”

President Lincoln’s Thanksgiving Proclamation reflects the same gratitude and hope that the Pilgrims demonstrated when they celebrated with the first Thanksgiving feast in 1621, 400 years ago. After enduring a year of intense hardship and heartbreak from the loss of loved ones to illness, they were able to offer thanks to God because of their hope in Him.

This is a powerful reminder for us today as our country is indeed facing challenging times. As we celebrate Thanksgiving this year, let us follow the example of the Pilgrims and President Lincoln in recognizing that Thanksgiving gives hope because of Who we are thanking, and not because of circumstances or material blessings.

**We at AACCS wish you a blessed Thanksgiving as you reflect on God’s great goodness.**