

# Family Matters

## November 2008

### *New Life for a Purpose*

*“Though we were slaves, our God has not deserted us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem.” Ezra 9:9 NIV*

November is such a great month –at least in my mind and heart. Oh, I don’t much like the cold weather that is fast approaching, but with the latter months of the year come the holidays, beginning with Thanksgiving. I love Thanksgiving Day and how the first settlers of America celebrated God’s goodness to them through a special day of feasting and expressing thanksgiving to the Lord for seeing them through the hard first winter (nearly half of the original 102 pilgrims died of starvation and sickness.)

Shortly after our nation was founded and our constitution was passed, the first President of our United States announced that the first Thursday of November was to be a day for giving thanks to the Lord. It was in 1863, after President Abraham Lincoln delivered his famous speech called, The Gettysburg Address, that he declared the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each November as a national holiday. This declaration came after Lincoln had walked among the thousands of graves of slain soldiers; which moved him to surrender his life to Christ. The holiday of Thanksgiving is rooted in the truth that God is our Provider and Protector; that He is our Sustainer and our Savior. The Pilgrims and Presidents, Washington and Lincoln, were moved by the deep conviction that God gave them new life for a purpose: to enter into an ever deepening relationship with Him and to be His instruments of love to others around us (being grateful is a fruit of being His.) This purpose has not changed. Abraham, the father of our faith, was blessed by God to be a blessing to others (Gen12:1-3).

The above portion of scripture from Ezra was recorded as a message to be spoken to the men and women of Israel who had lived through the long years of discipline, and had returned to the land of Promise. It is a reminder to them of their purpose which is to flow out of a heart of gratefulness for the “new life” He has given to them. They were never forgotten or forsaken while in the midst of their years of captivity. He rescued them in order that they might give themselves to the purpose of rebuilding and repairing the walls and buildings of Jerusalem (a literal city and a symbol of the human heart.) This verse is one that defines for us our mission as a community of faith. Because He has given us new life, the community of New Life is called to live grateful lives of service to others through the enabling power of God’s Spirit. Our Thanksgiving holiday is a reminder of His work of transformation in our own lives. Out of the overflow of His grace, we are called to serve Him by being available to be used to see others transformed from ruin and brokenness to wholeness and viability. Will you in trust and worship, answer this call with me?

Pastor Dave