

## **“How To Cook a Turkey”**

### **Psalm 100**

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I would be willing to say that while many of you have several cookbooks in your home, you do not have the one compiled by Mrs. Geraghty, A Thanksgiving Cookbook. This is a cookbook of recipes written by her kindergarten class. Mrs. Geraghty even included a disclaimer at the beginning. “The teacher will not be responsible for medical bills resulting from the use of her cookbook.” After reading it, you understand why. Here are some of the entries.

How do you cook a turkey? According to Russell, “You cut the turkey up and put it in the oven for ten minutes on 300 degrees. You put gravy on it and eat it.”

Jeremy says, “You buy the turkey and take the paper off. Then you put it in the refrigerator and take it back out and cut it with a knife and make sure all the wires are out and take out the neck and the heart. Then you put it in a big pan and cook it for half an hour at 80 degrees. Then you invite people over and eat it.”

Alan believes this is how it is done. “First you shoot the turkey and then you cut it up. Then you put it in the oven and cook it for ten minutes on twenty degrees. You put it on a plate and then you eat it.”

Grace may know some things about cooking a turkey we don't. “First you add some salt. Then you put it in a bowl. Then you put brown sugar on it. Then you mix it all together with a spoon and then you add some milk and mix it again. And then you put it in a pan. Then you put it in the oven for fifteen minutes at sixteen degrees. Then you take it out of the oven and eat it.”

Lauren has worked out all the details in her mind. “Find a turkey and kill it. Cut it open. Put it in a pan. Pour milk in the pan. Put a little chicken with it. Put salsa on it. Take it out of the pan. Put it on the board. Cut it into little pieces. Put it on a rack. Put it in the oven for seven minutes at ten degrees. Take it out of the oven and put an eensy-weensy bit of sugar on it. Put a little more salsa on it. Then you eat it.”

If you are cooking a turkey this week and need directions, I suggest you call the Butterball hotline instead of trying these recipes. By the way, their number is 800-323-4848.

I have told you on previous occasions how much I enjoy Thanksgiving. In many ways, I consider it my favorite day of the year. Perhaps this is because I have such fond memories of this holiday. As a child, Thanksgiving was spent at my grandparents' house with extended family. Everything was perfect, or so it seemed to me. It was a day filled with fun, laughter, games and delicious food.

It is still all this but certainly much more. It holds much more meaning for me now than it did as a child. **Thanksgiving is a reminder of how powerful gratitude is.** It brings the best out in us: humility, generosity, kindness, patience and love. Gratitude lifts our spirits by helping us count our blessings. It also helps us carry our burdens, inspires us to be faithful stewards and enables us to love even the unlovely. I like the way Stephen Levine expresses it in his book, One Year to Live.

“Practicing gratitude increases our appreciation for life. It brings balance to those parts of the self that have cultivated attachment to our suffering, causing us to feel victimized by life, making God's imagined dial tone all too appealing. Gratitude can turn dross to gold, hell to heaven and death to life. It is a way of seeing and being.”

Perhaps this is why Elton Trueblood penned these words. “Gratitude is something that can never be overdone.” He's right, isn't he? The more grateful we are, the more precious life is.

All of us have so much for which to be grateful. We, of all people, are blessed with family, friends, faith, freedom, health, abundant resources and opportunities to achieve potential. Counting blessings is no small chore for those with discerning eyes and hearts.

I hope you will let the Psalmist help you count your blessings, too. His advice to us in Psalm 100 can make Thanksgiving even more meaningful.

I have loved this Psalm since childhood. I memorized it while in second grade for a school program and have cherished it ever since. I was attracted to it because of its simplicity and beauty. It is short, plain and positive. It appeals to me for two other reasons, though.

It is inclusive. This Psalm is a call to worship that was sung by worshipers as they made their way to the temple. Along their route, pilgrims from other lands were invited to blend their voices with the worshipers. People from all walks of life and locations were encouraged to enter the temple because there is but one God and all are His children.

“Make a joyful noise to the Lord, **all the lands!** Serve the Lord with gladness! Come before His presence with singing! Know that the Lord is God! **It is He that made us and we are His. We are his people and the sheep of His pasture.** Enter His gates with Thanksgiving and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him and bless His name!” Psalm 100:1-4.

This is very appealing to me. I want no one to travel alone in this world or to feel excluded from the family of faith. All my life I have tried to enlarge the table so that everyone can have a seat, enjoying warm fellowship, support and nourishment. Community and bridge building are important to me, and it is the Psalmist that modeled this for me. I thank him for this.

Secondly, this Psalm is special to me because of its tone. It is a cheerful song, filled with joy and praise. It is a hymn of thanksgiving.

Do you think the worshippers that were marching to the temple had amnesia? Had they forgotten their many trials and burdens? I don't think so. They were ever before them, but so were their blessings. They had much for which to be grateful and they were not going to let the cares of the world take away their joy or their voice.

“Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and bless His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations” Psalm 100: 4-5.

There are times when we, too, must sing songs of joy and thanksgiving even with tears in our eyes and pain in our hearts. The expression of gratitude doesn't occur solely after problems have been solved and issues have been resolved. Gratitude also flows from broken hearts that need to be comforted and downtrodden spirits that need to be lifted. As a matter of fact, the expression of thanksgiving is a part of the healing and encouraging process.

After inviting his readers to go to the temple to lift their voices to God in gratitude and praise, the Psalmist reminds them why they need to do so. **“For the Lord is good, His love endures forever and His faithfulness continues through all generations.”**

I am intrigued by the second part of this trilogy. I do not wish to overlook God's goodness and faithfulness, for they are equally important. However, the phrase, **“His love endures forever,”** caught my eye last week. I found that word “endures” rather odd.

What word could have been used that would have caused less surprise or suspicion? His love prevails forever. His love triumphs forever. His love lasts forever. These would not have turned my head, at least like this word “endures.” Why was this concept of everlasting love introduced? What was the message the writer wanted to share? Perhaps it was this.

God's love will be tested frequently, but it will never fail. He will love His children at their best and their worst, when they exceed expectations or disappoint Him, when they draw near or rebel against Him. Through it all, God will never quit loving, hoping and helping.

Nowhere is this more vividly seen than Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus died with love on his lips. His love endured a lot but it never failed. His love outlasted every evil and overcame all resistance, and so must ours.

This Psalm teaches me something about love that I need to know, especially as I gather with family and friends this week to celebrate Thanksgiving. Love will be tested over and over. At times loving others will lead to worry, pain, confusion, frustration and tears. Inevitably, those I

love will hurt and disappoint me. They may even rebel and reject me. All who love will be called on to endure a lot, and with God's help they will.

A five-year-old child looked at his mother and very angrily said, "I hate you!" The mother very wisely replied, "I want you to know your hate will not make me quit loving you!" That was one wise parent and later in life that child will realize it. I also think he will express profound gratitude for such a good, faithful and loving parent.

Who exemplifies this spirit of enduring love for you? Find a way this week to thank them. While you are at it, thank God for introducing enduring love to our world. It is the basis of all we believe about God and life. As Gulley and Mulholland have written in their book, If Grace is True, "If God's love can fail, we have no reason for hope." As the Psalmist has reminded us, God's love will not fail and for this we need to lift our voices in praise.

Psalm 100 will not teach you how to cook a turkey. For that you will need to consult Mrs. Geraghty's kindergarten cookbook. It will, however, help you understand the value of Thanksgiving and the reasons for expressing gratitude. Actually, it would provide a wonderful blessing for your meal this Thursday as you gather with family and friends. Share it with those around your table.