

From This Corner
THANKSGIVING TABLE
Larry R. Baird

“Until Christ comes and we feast at his heavenly banquet.”
From the Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

We would gather at my grandparent’s farmhouse for Thanksgiving dinner. Aunts, uncles, and cousins were at the table that seemed to stretch for miles. My childhood memories are often super-sized. I cannot tell you its actual length. There my parents, my brother, and I joined the others for the annual banquet. The table was so big that I had to lean in over my plate looking left and right to see everyone. The fare was turkey, dressing, sweet potatoes, scalloped oysters, peas, cranberries and bread. The follow-up was apple, pumpkin, and sometimes berry pie. It was a day dedicated to indulging in the blessings God had placed before us.

As I grew into my more cognizant years, I began to discern the weightiness of the conversation. There would be a blend of religion and politics, interspersed with the mundane. It was often heavily republican and evangelical. Even within that, however, there were obvious differences in opinion. Every year, as I remember it, someone would lament the condition of the world and opine that Christ’s return was imminent. Others expressed their view that the signs were not much different from the year before. More often than not, I kept my mouth shut and just hoped for one or two more Thanksgivings. When the talk generated too much interpersonal intensity, someone, often my father, would ask for a report on the score of the coincidental football game on the television in the next room. It always worked. Harmony could be restored while we were waiting for Jesus’ return. My dad and one uncle always made sure the television was on and turned to the game. Thanksgiving days in my youth were big, bold, lavish days of food and family conversation under girded by the unifying factor of the Christian faith. The dynamics made the day special and not the least boring.

As Christians, we gather at another table. This one is the Table of the Great Thanksgiving. Often times it resembles the table of my youth. The family is drawn there by way of tradition and love. Identities get shaped for years to come. Sometimes there is a difference of opinion about theological fine points. Most assuredly, the participants indulge in the blessings God has placed before them, especially the privilege of feasting on Christ during the earthly journey.

It is my prayer for you that the tables of Thanksgiving will be present in your life this season. May they all be big, bold, and lavish with Christ at the center. May it be so until Christ finally does return and we feast at his heavenly banquet where theological tension will cease and Thanksgiving will have nothing to do with football.