

SERMON - THANKSGIVING DAY - 26 NOVEMBER 2009
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

This morning, I want to use part of the Old Testament reading for Morning Prayer as my reference.

Deut. 26:2-4 (ESV) you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from your land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket, and you shall go to the place that the Lord your God will choose, to make his name to dwell there. [3] And you shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, 'I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.' [4] Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God.

Today, we come into this temple of God to offer Him our thanks for the many blessings that he has given us. The blessings of life and of love. The blessings of food and shelter. The blessings of being able to worship God without fear.

We live in a wonderful country. It is not perfect but it is still the best place in the world to live, as far I am concerned.

But how often do we think about how fortunate we are to be here. We sort of take it for granted most of the time.

Well, today, let's thank God for this wonderful nation. Let's thank God that we are privileged to live in this wonderful country. Let us give thanks for this flag which we now have standing tall in our church, this flag that represents to me the very essence of this great nation and the sacrifices of those who have given so much so that we can live under freedom.

During World War II, the government commissioned Norman Rockwell to paint a series

of paintings depicting our four basic freedoms; Freedom of Speech, Freedom from Want, Freedom of Worship and Freedom from Fear.

Today we thank Almighty God for those same freedoms as we gather here in this holy place and we give him Glory that we can come here in freedom; without fear, without want, and with the right to worship Him in a land of free speech.

There are those who do not want us to display this flag. There are those who do not want us to proclaim our God given right to say what is on our hearts and to proclaim His Holy Word.

There are those who would take away those same freedoms in the name of political correctness and liberal diversity.

But we will prevail because God will prevail.

But today, let us give thanks to God.

During the Clergy Conference the other week that Father Mark and I attended, I obtained the prayer that closed the last sermon given by Alexander Schmemmann, the late Orthodox priest and theologian. It was given on Thanksgiving Day in 1983.

I would like to share that prayer with you today.