

The Work of Your Hands

Leviticus 23:9–22

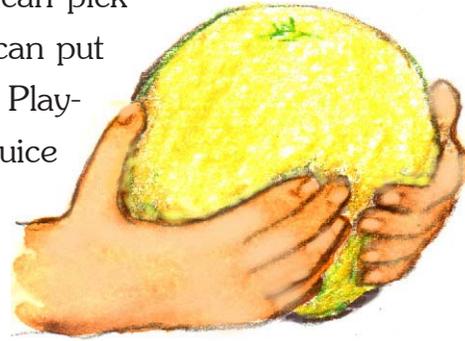


by the Rev. Peter Buss, Jr.

Illustrated by Marguerite Acton

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You have four fingers and a thumb on your left hand and four fingers and a thumb on your right hand. Take a look at your hands and think about this: what can you do with all those fingers and thumbs? I'll bet you can draw a picture. You may be able to snap your fingers. You can pick up toys, build a lego fort, and swing a baseball bat. You can pick up your food with your hands. I'll bet you can put on a bandage with your hands, and squish Play-Doh into the shape of an animal, and pour juice into your cup, and put on your clothes. What else can you do with your hands? Lots and lots of things!



The question I want you to think about today is, who gave you your hands? The answer, of course, is "The Lord." He made you the way you are. He gave you your hands which can do so many things.



Your mom and dad have probably told you lots of times to say thank you when someone does something nice for you. Well, the Lord does nice things for us all the time. He gives us our families. He makes the flowers and trees. He watches over us and tries to make us happy.

Thanksgiving is a great time to say thank you to the Lord for all the wonderful things He does for us. Today I want you to think about saying thank you to the Lord for your hands, and for all the things you can do with your hands. There is a place in the Lord's Word where the Lord asks us to say thank you to Him for all the things we can do with our hands. I want to tell you about the first people who heard the Lord ask them to thank Him in this way.



The people I want to tell you about were called the ancient Israelites, and they lived a long time ago in a land far away from here called the land of Canaan. They were farmers. Some of them planted seeds and grew food to eat. Others cared for fruit trees and grapevines. Most of their work they did with their own hands because they didn't have big tractors and other machines to help them as farmers do today. They would dig up the dirt, put some seeds in the ground, and pack the dirt over the seeds. Later they would pull out the weeds, which got in the way of the plants. They would also water their plants, and take care of them until they grew up and produced crops. When the time was right, they would pick the cucumbers, and tomatoes, and apples, and grapes, and the other things they grew.

In the Word, the Lord called all the work that the farmers did to grow their crops, “the work of [their] hands” (Deuteronomy 16:15). Just like us, their hands were very useful tools. They could do lots of important things with them.

Now just as the Lord wants us to say thank you to Him for all the nice things He does for us, He also wanted the ancient Israelites to say thank you to Him. He wanted them to remember that He had helped them to grow their crops. Not only had He sent the sunshine and the rain, but He had also given the people their hands which could do all that work of caring for their crops.



So the Lord commanded the Israelites to hold a special feast at the time when they picked their crops, to say thank you to Him. They called it the Feast of Ingathering. Here's what the Lord said about this feast: "Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice." (Deuteronomy 16:15)



Their Feast of Ingathering was sort of like our Thanksgiving day. It happened about the same time of year as Thanksgiving does in North America, and they had a big celebration, as we often have a big meal on Thanksgiving day.

Thanksgiving is a time when you can remember to thank the Lord. You can think about the fact that He has given you your hands. Just as He promised to bless the Israelites in all the work of their hands, so He promises to help you do lots of things with your hands. Right now it may be that you're learning to tie your shoes, or cut your food with a knife. Later you may learn to write in cursive, or type, or paint a beautiful picture. Can you remember to say thank you to the Lord for helping you to do all these things? If you can, the Lord promises to be with you, and to make you a very happy and useful person!

How You Can Say Thank You to the Lord



There's one thing we can all do every single day to thank the Lord for helping us in all these ways: by folding our hands and saying the Lord's Prayer. It may seem like a simple thing not as big as a whole Thanksgiving celebration, but it can be very powerful. When you fold your hands (or hold hands with people in your family), it is a simple way of stopping doing anything else. You're not playing with toys, or tickling your brother; you're not drawing a picture, or brushing your hair. Instead, you're using your hands to pray to the Lord. It is a way of saying thank you to the Lord for making you such a useful person who is able to do so many things. It is a way of remembering that He gave you your hands, and promises to help you do many good things with them today, and tomorrow, and always.

At meal times, you can also say thank you to the Lord by repeating one of the blessings or graces. Many people like to say, “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy is forever. Amen” (Psalm 107:1). But, there are many other blessings you can say. Just as with saying the Lord’s prayer, you might want to fold your hands or hold hands with the people in your family. When you say the blessing, you are thanking the Lord for everything that He gives you every day including your useful hands. That way you are having a Thanksgiving each day.

