

It is with a grateful heart that I give thanks to God for all those who are reading this devotion and to the Almighty God who gives me the words to share,

**SCRIPTURE:**

1 Chronicles 16:34 (NIV) – Larger reading: Chronicles 16:8-36

*"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever."*

**A STORY FOR THANKSGIVING DAY –**

It is a story that has been shared by many authors - Paul Aurandt, "The Old Man and the Gulls", Paul Harvey's The Rest of the Story, and in Heaven Bound Living, by Knofel Stanton. I first heard in when Paul Harvey told it on one of his, "The Rest of the Story," radio programs. It touched me then and it touches me now. Gratitude is such a deep emotion. We each should find ways to express the gratitude of our lives to those who have assisted us on our journey. And now, for the rest of the story ...

It is gratitude that prompted an old man to visit an old broken pier on the eastern seacoast of Florida. Every Friday night, until his death in 1973, he would return, walking slowly and slightly stooped with a large bucket of shrimp. The sea gulls would flock to this old man, and he would feed them from his bucket. Many years before, in October, 1942, Captain Eddie Rickenbacker was on a mission in a B-17 to deliver an important message to General Douglas MacArthur in New Guinea. But there was an unexpected detour which would hurl Captain Eddie into the most harrowing adventure of his life.

Somewhere over the South Pacific the Flying Fortress became lost beyond the reach of radio. Fuel ran dangerously low, so the men ditched their plane in the ocean...For nearly a month Captain Eddie and his companions would fight the water, and the weather, and the scorching sun. They spent many sleepless nights recoiling as giant sharks rammed their rafts. The largest raft was nine by five. The biggest shark...ten feet long.

But of all their enemies at sea, one proved most formidable: starvation. Eight days out, their rations were long gone or destroyed by the salt water. It would take a miracle to sustain them. And a miracle occurred. In Captain Eddie's own words, "Cherry," that was the B- 17 pilot, Captain William Cherry, "read the service that afternoon, and we finished with a prayer for deliverance and a hymn of praise. There was some talk, but it tapered off in the oppressive heat. With my hat pulled down over my eyes to keep out some of the glare, I dozed off."

Now this is still Captian Rickenbacker talking..."Something landed on my head. I knew that it was a sea gull. I don't know how I knew, I just knew. Everyone else knew too. No one said a word, but peering out from under my hat brim without moving my head, I could see the expression on their faces. They were staring at that gull. The gull meant food...if I could catch it."

And the rest, as they say, is history. Captain Eddie caught the gull. Its flesh was eaten. Its intestines were used for bait to catch fish. The survivors were sustained and their hopes renewed because a lone sea gull, uncharacteristically hundreds of miles from land, offered itself as a sacrifice. You know that Captain Eddie made it.

And now you also know...that he never forgot. Because every Friday evening, about sunset...on a lonely stretch along the eastern Florida seacoast...you could see an old man walking...white-haired, bushy-eyebrowed, slightly bent. His bucket filled with shrimp was to feed the gulls...to remember that one which, on a day long past, gave itself without a struggle...like manna in the wilderness.

**QUOTE:**

*“When eating fruit, remember the one who planted the tree.”* -Vietnamese Proverb

**PRAYER**

For all that you have provided, I give you thanks. For all those that made it possible for me to have what I have, I give you thanks. For the gift of another day, the breath which fills my lungs, the friends and family that do for me more than I can ever imagine, I give you thanks. It is with a grateful heart that I lift my voice in praise of your glory and the salvation that comes to me in Jesus Christ ... In all of this and more, I give you thanks in Jesus' name. Amen

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***Have a truly blessed Thanksgiving day.***