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November 14, 2023

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37215

November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1963. Exactly one hundred years after Abraham Lincoln issued his first Thanksgiving proclamation – officially cementing it as a national holiday – President John F. Kennedy gave a Thanksgiving proclamation of his own. It was an address brimming with gratitude for our country’s past and optimism for its future. Here is an excerpt of what he said:

*Today we are a nation of nearly two hundred million souls, stretching from coast to coast, on into the Pacific and north toward the Arctic, a nation enjoying the fruits of an ever-expanding agriculture and industry and achieving standards of living unknown in previous history. We give our humble thanks for this.*

*Today, we give our thanks, most of all, for the ideals of honor and faith we inherit from our forefathers – for the decency of purpose, steadfastness of resolve and strength of will, for the courage and the humility which they possessed and which we must seek every day to emulate. As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them.*

*Let us therefore proclaim our gratitude to Providence for manifold blessings – let us be humbly thankful for inherited ideals – and let us resolve to share those blessings and those ideals with our fellow human beings throughout the world.*

Less than three weeks later, President Kennedy was dead – killed by an assassin’s bullet. It was just six days before Thanksgiving.

The tragedy was so shocking, so cruel, I imagine many Americans didn’t feel like celebrating a holiday that year. There was too much to figure out, too much to grieve. The world suddenly seemed like a more dangerous place. The nation, perhaps less stable than it had been in living memory. The future, more nebulous and less certain than ever before. Nevertheless, Thanksgiving still had to go on. President Kennedy had decreed it so. It was one of the last official acts he would ever do.

So, on Thursday, November 28<sup>th</sup>, the nation’s newest president, Lyndon B. Johnson, issued his own Thanksgiving address. In it, he reminded America that, despite everything, there was still much to be grateful for. Here are some excerpts of what he said (a few of which I have condensed and edited together).<sup>2</sup> I think they are powerful words to remember, this and every Thanksgiving.

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<sup>1</sup>“Proclamation 3560 – Thanksgiving Day, 1963,” <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-3560-thanksgiving-day-1963>

<sup>2</sup>“The President’s Thanksgiving Day Address to the Nation,” <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-thanksgiving-day-address-the-nation>

My fellow Americans: All of us have lived through 7 days that none will ever forget. We are not given the divine wisdom to answer why this has been, but we are given the duty of determining what is *to be*. What is to be for America, for the world, for the cause we lead, for all the hopes that live in our hearts.

A great leader is dead; a great Nation must move on. Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or to lose. I am resolved that we shall win the tomorrows before us. So, I ask you to join in that resolve, determined that from this midnight of tragedy, we shall move to a new American greatness.

More than any generation before us, we have cause to be thankful, so thankful, on this Thanksgiving Day. Our harvests are bountiful, our factories flourish, our homes are safe, our defenses are secure. The goodwill of the world pours out for us.

But more than these blessings, we know tonight that our system is strong – strong and secure. A deed that was meant to tear us apart has bound us together. Our system has passed – you have passed – a great test. You have shown what John F. Kennedy called upon us to show in *his* proclamation of this Thanksgiving: that decency of purpose, that steadfastness of resolve, and that strength of will which we inherit from our forefathers. What better conveys what is best for America than this?

Since last Friday, Americans have turned to the good, to the decent values of our life. These have saved us. Yes, these have saved us. And how much better would it be, how much more sane it would be, how much more decent and American it would be if all Americans could spend their fortunes, could give their time and spend their energies helping our system and its servants to solve problems instead of pouring out the venom and the hate that stalemate us in progress.

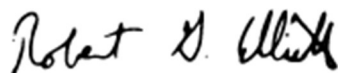
Let all who speak, all who teach, all who preach, all who publish, all who broadcast, and all who read or listen – let them reflect upon their responsibilities to bind our wounds, to heal our sores, to make our society whole for the tasks ahead of us. It is this work I most want to do: to banish rancor from our words and malice from our hearts; to close down the poison spring of hatred and intolerance and fanaticism; to perfect our unity north and south, east and west; to hasten the day when bias of race, religion, and region is no more; and to bring the day when our spirit will be free of the burdens that we have borne too long.

[So], on this Thanksgiving Day, as we gather in the warmth of our families, in the mutual love and respect which we have for another, as we bow our heads in submission to divine providence...let us today renew our dedication to the ideals that are American. Let us pray for His divine wisdom in banishing from our land any injustice or intolerance or oppression to any of our fellow Americans whatever their opinion, whatever the color of their skins. [Let us work] for a new American greatness, a new day when peace is more secure, when justice is more universal, when freedom is more strong in every home of all mankind.

Today, exactly sixty years since the events of November 1963, we live in a time that also seems uncertain. A time where the future seems nebulous. But I take comfort in knowing we are not the first Americans to deal with this. And if we remember Kennedy's words – to maintain our decency of purpose, steadfastness of resolve, and strength of will – we will all come through it in the end, stronger and more united than ever before. That's what our ancestors have always done. It's what we will do, too.

There is always so much to be grateful for, no matter what time period we live in. I am thankful for my family and friends. For my clients and my team. For my community and my country. For the ideals we have inherited. And I am thankful to have a day such as this, when I can remember my gratitude...and by remembering it, strengthen it even more. So, on behalf of everyone on my team, I wish you a very happy Thanksgiving!

Sincerely,



Robert G. Elliott, CFP®, MS  
Vice President



Sarah L. Elliott, CFP®