

## "In Every Thing Give Thanks"

Texts: Job 23:1-9, 16-17

Hebrews 4:12-16 (Series B, Thanksgiving 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost) Ps. 22:1-15

Mark 10:17-31

Let us Pray –

O God, light of the minds that know you, life of the souls that love you, and strength of the hearts that seek you - bless the words of my lips and the meditations of our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

The ability to give thanks with a joyful heart begins with recognizing God as the source of all good things and that God is always faithful toward his children. Remembering what God has done, made possible, or mercifully prevented doesn't just provide us with a sense of self-satisfied gratitude. Rather, the Scripture teaches us *to remember*, which is the point of today's readings.

We are *to remember* God is the one who is faithful and provides, not us. Giving thanks is an important corrective to our own egos. Giving thanks helps us *remember* who is in charge (not us!). Giving thanks helps us remember God is the landowner and we are only stewards. God is the landlord and we are only tenants.

Human nature hasn't changed much since the days of our fore parents. Humans being still feel the need to pat ourselves on the back when things go well, but blame God when they go wrong. The Bible warns us never to forget that God and God alone is the source of all that we have, all that we are, and all that is to come. Because of this, it is our spiritual duty to share God's gifts and our blessings with others.

My recent trip to Ghana, helped me once again to realized how blessed we are in this country. We don't have to plan our meals around shopping trips to a large city. We don't have to walk miles to see a doctor, deal with shortage of water etc.

When was the last time you and I simply thanked God for electricity? Or flush toilets? Or a bed to sleep in? Or the car, cell phone, TV, computer, hospitals, nursing homes, you not only take for granted, but are usually annoyed with?

Like those early immigrants from different countries to this land, we too would have nothing, without God's providence, overflowing generosity, kindness, and love. We have much to thank God for in this life.

Sharing God's generosity with others is the very act of giving thanks. We give thanks every time we put an extra can or two in the food bank box. We give thanks when we donate used clothes to the poor and the needy either domestic or foreign. We give thanks every time we place our offering in the plate and remember God has been gracious to us. Giving thanks is sharing God's blessings with others.

Today we celebrate the goodness of our God in providing to us the bounty of the earth, sea, and sky - the goodness of God who grants to us both seedtime and harvest, the goodness of God who shares with us the love that is in his heart and calls us to likewise share.

Here are some facts I would like you and I to think about today. They came from a note that I received from a member of the congregation a couple several years ago. It concerns a variety of the blessings we have received in this most special land in which we live. It goes like this:

If you own just one Bible, you are abundantly blessed. One- third of the world does not have access to even one..

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million who will not survive the week..

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 500 million people around the world..

If you attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed than almost three billion people in the world.

If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.

If your parents are still married and alive, you are very rare, even here in Canada.

If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful, you are blessed because the majority can, but most do not..

If you can hold someone's hand, hug them or even touch them on the shoulder, you are blessed because you can offer God's healing touch..

If you prayed yesterday and today, you are in the minority because you believe in God's willingness to hear and answer prayer.

The story of thanksgiving is a story about sharing and caring when blessings seem scarce. The thanksgiving brings people closer together, and feeds those who are hungry. It reminds us that everyone, no matter how poor they may seem, has some gift or contribution they can make for the betterment of all.

A gift for which we should give thanks. A gift which we, who may be rich as the world counts riches, should not ignore - no matter how small that gift may seem to some. We are blessed.

Some have more - some less - but each one of us has something we can share - some way in which we can offer God's healing touch - some way in which we can come together and add to the pot that feeds all who hunger for food and drink and for warmth and love.

This Thanksgiving Sunday, like so many in the past we here at St. Ansgar's are sharing. We bring as we do each week our offerings of thanks for God's work in this place and beyond; and we bring a special harvest offering to be shared in the community through our community Food Bank.

But Thanksgiving is not simply about sharing whether it be from our abundance or from our relative poverty. Rather Thanksgiving has two components -

- the giving of Thanks.
- And sharing or giving of a portion of the blessings we have.

God has directed us to live no matter what our circumstances may be. Do not worry, Jesus says, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Thanks be to God who indeed has given us all that we need - blessings not just of food and drink, warmth and shelter, but blessings as well of love and acceptance, forgiveness and hope, prayer and praise, love and joy.

The portion from Mark's Gospel is asking us what it is that we truly *need* in this life. A man grieves as he walks away from Jesus because while he follows the commandments he doesn't want to let go of his earthly possessions.

*The beauty of gratitude is that:* Thanksgiving drives us beyond our own selfishness, and wants. Even those with nothing can give the gift of thanks Mother Theresa said. I believe the best way to give gratitude is turning our *Thanksgiving* into *Thanks Living*.

Giving thanks means thanking God with a joyful heart. Our God is an abundant God offering abundant life to all. Remember how Jesus said, "*I have come that you might have abundant life*" (John 10:10). We need only open our eyes, our hearts to hear his invitation to receive that abundant life which a free gift.

When we have accepted God's gracious offer of life everlasting, we know the joy that comes from deep within and bubbles up as thanksgiving. Give thanks then with a joyful heart now and always. Final thought: we should love God not only for what does, but for who he is. And to trust in him, even through calamity.

**Stir us to thanks-living, O Lord, teach us to love you  
for who you are, and not what you do,  
and help us to encourage others to come to you,  
so that you can make them well.**

**Amen.**

**Have A Happy Thanksgiving.**