

## "Gratitude "

**Texts: Deuteronomy 26:1-11**

**Philippians 4:4-9 ( Series C, Thanksgiving Sunday ) Psalm 100**

**John 6:25-35**

**Bless thou, the words of my lips and the meditations of our hearts that they be of profit to us and acceptable to thee,  
O our rock and our redeemer. Amen**

Prayer:

A man and his wife on a strict diet, sat down at the table for a meatless meal, all steamed and all green. He looked at what was before him and said, "You say the blessing. If I thank the Lord for this, He'll know I'm lying!"

There is an old story about a far away land which was ruled by a mean king. The king had an ironclad grip over all parts of his kingdom, except for one frustrating area. He was unable to destroy the people's belief in God. He called his counsellors together and put the question to them: *"Where can I hide God so that the people will end up forgetting him?"*

" One counsellor suggested that God be hidden on the dark side of the moon. This idea was debated for some time, but voted down because it was believed that one day scientists would discover a means of space travel and God would end being found again. Another advisor to the king came up with idea of burying God beneath the depths of the ocean floor.

This was voted down for basically the same reason - it was felt that scientific advancement would lead to the discovery of God even beneath the depths of the ocean floor. Finally, the oldest and wisest of the counsellors had a flash of insight. "I know", he said, *"why don't we hide God where no one will ever think of finding him?"*

He explained, *"If we hide God in the ordinary events of people's everyday lives they'll never find him."* And so, it was done - and they say that people are still looking for God - even today.

Today is a special day because we believe that at thanksgiving time, we see God and what God does in the normal and routine parts of our lives a little more clearly than we normally do.

This is Thanksgiving Sunday the scripture lessons focus on what God has done, and that the decorations in the sanctuary and the beauty of the fall outside, foster in us a natural appreciation for God's handicraft.

Indeed, the very atmosphere at this time of year seems to encourage us to pause for a moment and identify just how blessed we are, just how much we are subjects of God's grace. And that's good - because it leads us into the transforming wonder of thanksgiving.

I believe my friends that thanksgiving is an important part of our faith, and by this I do not mean the time of year called thanksgiving. Indeed, I believe that gratitude, the root of thanksgiving - is a necessary attitude, an attitude that is needed by us if we are to experience the fullness of the salvation that God has planned for us.

Look at this building -- this sanctuary – look at everything about it and everything in it, from the cross at the front to the doors at the back, is here by the grace of God - indeed we are here by the grace of God. In the 26th chapter of Deuteronomy which we read from this morning the people of Israel are told what they should say when they bring their offerings to the temple. They are to say:

*"The Lord brought us into this place, and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring*

The Lord has brought us into this place, and the Lord has given us the fruit of the earth in this place, he has given us our daily bread, he has brought us safe to this point in time. This is the message of all scripture, that everything around us, and everything that we are and everything that we have is a gift of God.

Indeed, the scriptures go further, they remind us that the gifts of God are often given to us through others, (a). *Some through the work of other people who are known to us, (b). Some through people who will always be unknown to us, nameless servants of God's grace.*

Look at this building again - this gift is from God.

The fact that the building is warm is due to the fact that someone out of love for God and concern for God's people came early and turned it on the heat The music we hear and sing today, the pews we sit on and the pulpit I stand behind - everything here represents a series of gifts from God to us.

\*\*\* Ninety-five years ago, a hand full of families from Denmark had the vision to establish a Lutheran congregation in Montreal. And for *Ninety-five years* God's Word has been preached, the Sacraments ministered, weddings performed, and the faithful were laid to rest from their labour from this building, broken relations and lives mended and individuals that walked through these doors had been blessed and found peace with God. Having each other is a gift in itself. All these calls for thanksgiving.

Gifts of God - gifts that have come to us through the labour and the dedication of the people beside you, of the people who went before us, and of the people who went before them, people who despite their flaws they undoubtedly had, served God as best as they could.

Are we aware – that from day to day, just how much has been done for us? How much we have received through no merit of our own? All these calls for thanksgiving. Waking up have breakfast calls for thanksgiving.

We call this sermon **Gratitude** of the Heart- A Necessary Attitude! Without the attitude of gratitude our salvation is incomplete and the health of our families and of our churches, and of our nation and our world is in danger.

We might be living with chronic pain, or suffering from a decline in the standard of living - or laid offs, or we may simply not feel appreciated or valued by others- any of a hundred things could be troubling us and making us feel miserable - even making us question God or doubt his omnipotence. <3>

That is normal, but it is equally important that we go beyond the questions and doubts back to our faith - and it is here - in the difficult times - that *thanksgiving* is of crucial importance to us as individuals - that turning to God and remembering before him all that He is, and all that He has done is very significant and very helpful.

In my travel, I have come in contact with really good people of different faith. But one of the most beautiful people I ever met was a 92year old lady who was a paraplegic. She was confined to a hospital's extended care – a hospital outside of Vancouver, BC.

And there she lived all her days between her bed and her wheel chair. She had diabetes and several other health problems - and in five years she lost both feet by amputation so that she might be able to go on living.

She had considerable pain, most days she was very uncomfortable - and there was for her no family to come in and visit - she had simply outlived most of them. What this woman did during her days was quite wonderful – on good days, she would wheeled her chair up and down the corridors and popped in and out and visit the other residents in the place.

She learned their birthdays and sent them cards, she checked when they seemed depressed and listened to them talk of it and gave their hand a squeeze and prayed with them if they were willing. She went to the recreation room and took part in the games - often helping the staff help others.

She was a light in a dark place - full of joy and peace despite her own troubles and woes. I would pray for her and she would pray for me and those around her and she would always give thanks to God at the end of each prayer for his goodness and his love - for how he worked his will - and helped her each day - even in the days of pain.

This woman's beauty - her ability to help others - her faith and love and compassion was rooted in her *thanksgiving* - thanksgiving that was made even when it might seem crazy to other people to make it.

G.K. Chesterton called gratitude *"the mother of all virtues"*. One of the most significant changes that Jesus Christ wants to make in our hearts and lives is to transform us into people who are continually grateful. Psalm 30:11-12 says: *You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. LORD my God, I will praise you forever.*

***"We are who we are because of another person."*** I have shared immensely with most of you my faith stories, that I am what I am in my spiritual journey because of others.

And whenever I stand (*up here*) to speak, I speak what I have learned from godly people such as you. You are living documents, my faith in God was something I learned from my mother and other godly people as I traveled around the world.

I give thanks to God for each and every one of you here every day for contributing to my faith journey and ministry. God asks us for our thanksgiving - whether we feel like making it or not - so that we might experience the blessings it brings -blessings it brings to us, and blessings it brings to others.

I would like you to take a moment to think of things that you are thankful for! Look, around you - find that which is good and thank God for it - find that which is caring and thank God and the person who is doing it - look around - look inside - look outside - and think on that which is noble and true and beautiful and express your praise for it - express it no matter what the bad or the ugly may be up to.

God is hidden in the ordinary routine events of our life - our practice of thanksgiving will bring him to our sight and in so doing bring to others and ourselves a better world.

Our God is an abundant God offering abundant life to all. 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.

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. Thanks be to God for all that he has done.

Let us pray:

**God, we bring to you our tithes and our offerings, symbols of the work you make it possible for us to do, that they may be used in works of love and obedience.**

**We present to you the food of your earth, food that you gave to sustain our life in this place, that it may be used to feed and encourage others. We dedicate to you our lives, lives that can only be made whole by your holy presence, that you may use us as your grateful servants, to bless one another and the world you have made. Amen.**