

October 9, 2016

The Overflow
2 Samuel 6:12-23

Rev. Jared Miller

Most of us don't realize it, but there's a story behind Canadian Thanksgiving. It's not one they particularly emphasize in school because it's not a particularly resonant story. It's actually probably the most Canadian a story can be before the invention of Hockey. It was on the second Monday of October, 1578 (40 years before the Pilgrims set sail) that Martin Frobisher landed on Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic and gave thanks for safe passage. No Harvest. No Feast. No Turkeys. Just a human being thankful for being able to finally place his feet on solid ground.

To me, this story does two things.

It reminds us how feeble our thankfulness is. Every year, we gather around a table with friends and family and take time to consider all of the ways that God has blessed us. And then we eat and drink ourselves into a coma. For the most part, if we're honest, our thanksgiving ends after we've gone around the table and fit every last ounce of stuffing into ourselves that we possibly can. We're thankful – and then we consume – patting ourselves on the back for being good and mindful of everything that we have. Like most Canadians, I've never known real hunger, and so thanksgiving is a feast day among so many feast days. I can go to any buffet and be in awe of the plenty God has so graciously provided me. For the most part, our thanksgiving is so oversaturated with the excess of our culture that we lost the ability to appreciate what it really means.

But Thanksgiving also reminds us how big it can be. Imagine being so thankful for being alive that your natural inclination is to worship. Baffin Island is beautiful, but not in October. The story of Canadian Thanksgiving challenges us to move beyond what we can quantify and qualify and cling to what we know in the depth of our spirit. To know that our thanksgiving has nothing to do with food, but has everything to do with being brought safely through the desolation and being able to set your feet on solid ground. That's why in the church, every month we celebrate thanksgiving. With our faith family, we gather around a table and feast on the eucharist – which literally means, thanksgiving meal. We celebrate it with a strip of bread and a sip of juice because it's not about the excess. It's about the arrival.

That's why David celebrates so exuberantly in this final story. Because being King is great. Being anointed is good. But those are the things of excess. What David is really after is access. And so, arriving in the presence of God, that's something to celebrate. This is a story of what a life of thanksgiving looks like. So grateful to be able to welcome God into the city of God, David clothes felt like they were constricting him and restricting his freedom, and so he strips them off and dances down main street wearing practically nothing. Scandalous? Sure. But David could care less. He's living out his thanksgiving. He's celebrating God's goodness. And he'll become more undignified if that's what it takes.