

October 8, 2017

**Growing in Gratitude**  
*Psalm 100, Lev 19:9-10 & James 2:14-16*

Rev. Jan Hazlett

Thanksgiving Sunday, a day we set aside to give thanks for all God is and has done  
As part of this service we have expressed gratitude to for enhanced worship and faith nurture enabled  
by the renovation, but our words only go so far,

What we did is just a beginning, we will show our gratitude to God by how we use this space  
as we use this space in mission and ministry, in ways that honour God, and serve our Lord.

In all our lives, as we recognize how wonderful God is and God's grace poured out for us,  
we will want to add actions to our words to show our gratitude to God in ways that honour God.

We set aside Thanksgiving Sunday as a special time to give thanks at the end of the growing season.

It is an obvious time to give thanks because God's provision is concretely obvious in the harvest.

Too often we make time on this weekend, year in and year out to give thanks.

Just as we did last year, but have no continuity in between.

But the intent is not that we reserve this day and this day only to focus on our gratitude,

But that today we are reminded that God continues to provide for us always,

So our thanks should be continuous, in all our lives,

As disciples we are called to live as the Apostle Paul suggested: giving thanks always.

So today we will consider ways to intentionally grow in gratitude and live our thanksgiving.

Canadian writer, theologian, social activist and member of the order of Canada, Mary Jo Leddy

Wrote about current culture and our need to intentionally work toward a spiritual attitude of gratitude

Ms. Leddy observed that it is difficult to maintain an attitude of gratitude in our lives today.

I have adapted some of her ideas for what I say today.

She holds that "ingratitude" is engrained in our worldview in western society

That our economic system only works for as long as people want more,

Daily we are immersed in cultural messages trying to convince us that what we have is not enough.

This was exemplified by Wealthy businessman Rockefeller

When asked "how much was enough" he replied "just a little bit more"

Ever before us is the carrot—the belief—that just a little bit more will be enough....but never is

I think you will agree This is not a good recipe for expressing gratitude,

So we are taught to say thank you, even as we are left wanting more,

Thinking when we have it THEN we will be truly grateful—this attitude affects how we live.

In the midst of our cultural reality, Jesus continues to call us to a different way of living

That moves us beyond our focus on what we have and the more we think we want

The Apostle Paul wrote:

"I have learned to be content with whatever I have"

This stands in stark contrast with the messages we receive every day of "I need a little bit more"

As a disciple Paul shows us an alternative, and shows us our need to step back and consider

How our culture affects our attitude, and what discipleship might mean in our culture.

Paul points to our need to grow beyond and be released from the culture of perpetual dissatisfaction,

He suggests that we should give thanks in all circumstances

Examples of expressed gratitude.

Indeed we are grateful when we stop to reflect on it,

But because we are immersed in a culture that breeds dissatisfaction,

It is hard to be thankful as we are encouraged to want more.

We need to be intentional about being thankful and choosing gratitude over cultural messages of more

For what are you grateful?

Taking time to reflect and give thanks is a start, but we need to be intentional about how we live

we need to pay attention and wisely choose what stories we choose to live by

As disciples, we have a story to live by that provides us an alternative to the cultural script of more  
Our story is this:

We believe God is with us, moving, providing us an alternative script of abundance and freedom  
This allows us to share what we have, trusting that we will have enough.

As disciples we are called to a way of life in which our desire for more for ourselves is replaced with  
desire share so all have enough, loving others as ourselves.

This way of being or “Thanks Living” takes practice. Some ideas to help on our way:

1. Begin each day with gratitude to God, for life, for mystery of God’s presence and love

Thank God for promise to be with you throughout the day, to give strength and hope,

And to share what we have. Beginning a day with gratitude we will help us be aware of what we have  
throughout the day

2. And at the end of the day look back on the day with gratitude. In difficult situations when we  
do not feel grateful, perhaps we can be grateful that God has been with us, for people to share  
the burdens, for grace to forgive and be forgiven.

3. Intentionally choose to trust, God’s way over the way of consumer society.

Trusting that we will have what we need, what we are is enough, what we do in God is enough.

Then watch throughout the day for temptations to trust in something or someone else,

Rather than letting it happen, reaffirm your intent to put your trust in God above all else.

4. In Jesus we see an example gratitude not just as words, but in all his living.

Jesus gratitude came from his trust in God,

Which allowed him to give—of himself and of what he had

He shared 5 loaves and two fish with a multitude,

He freely gave his life for us,

As we focus on gratitude and trust in God, our desire to live in response to God increases

Our desire to show our gratitude to God will lead us to act as Jesus did,

Sharing what we have, offering food, water, companionship and forgiveness

As we act out our gratitude, rather than diminishing us, it will grow....

5. Choose whom we will imitate,

Rather than going along with consumerism, we need to find models of giving thanks in our culture.

Search your memory and see whom you can identify as a grateful, free, and happy person.

One of these models for me came was found years ago on a trip to a mountain village in Guatemala,

The community provided wonderful meals for us even though their crops had failed

And they did not have enough to last until the next growing season,

Rather than acting out of what they did not have, they freely shared what they had.

Be intentional about whom you will imitate And begin taking steps to imitate each day.

There are many ways to grow in gratitude, you can probably name several more.

But they remain ideas until you intentionally put them into practice intentionally, every day

So that your gratitude does not remain an idea, but becomes “thanks living”

In your bulletin there is a book mark.

On the back is an opportunity to share

Take it home and use it, or post it as a reminder of the next step you are committed to take toward  
thanks-living every day.

May our gratitude issue into action, so that we become models of thanks-living Amen