

**SERMON: “Don’t Worry, Be Thankful!”**

Rev. Geoff Ross: St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church

Sunday, October 11, 2020

*[“We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven.... But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us.” Guess who said this?/Abraham Lincoln-#16-1863/TGD Proclamation.(Doubt #45 would say that!) Not much has changed.]*

So, who’s feeling ‘thankful’? How many of you are even feeling ‘happy’? This week – as I was totally revising what I was going to do/say today – a lot has happened: Seriously!- days feel like weeks/feel like months; there’s too much information/happening/no time to process before the next crisis/disaster comes out of nowhere (TW: archeologists found/opened a sealed tomb in Egypt with 50+ 2500yr/old mummies...NO! sorry). Many of you – like me – are wearing down. And, now, we’re losing ground to the COVID19 pandemic – again! We’re too exhausted to be scared – we’re just struggling to keep up/stay afloat/get through each minute/hour/day – let alone be ‘happy’/‘thankful.’

*[I’m a ‘Grace/Hope - ‘glass-is-more-than-half-full’ - Guy’/God’s plan/purpose for us: Don’t worry/be thankful!]*

And, yet, it is Thanksgiving Sunday/Weekend – the weekend we remind ourselves to be ‘thankful’, and to ‘give thanks’ for the blessings we enjoy. Trouble is, like Honest Abe said 157 years ago, we’re “intoxicated” with our “superior wisdom and virtue” and are “too proud to pray to the God that made us.” Thanksgiving weekend has become a bloated, gluttonous, celebration of excess and consumption – second only in excess to Christmas. It’s not about focusing on our blessings, it’s more about reminding ourselves – like Scrooge McDuck – of our self-gained accomplishments. Even if we were able to celebrate Thanksgiving Weekend is being ‘thankful’ supposed to be about ‘things’? Maybe that’s where it went wrong....

*[Bible: 59 times/“thanks” - “give thanks to the Lord”/“in everything give thanks”/“serving Him with thankful hearts” – nowhere does it say: ‘when you feel like it!’ God’s plan/purpose for you and for me is for us to give thanks to **Him**, and He instructs us to give thanks, not just when we feel like it, but **all the time.**]*

Throughout the Bible we are provided with examples of how we are to live in the present with a faith rooted in the knowledge and experience of God’s presence in our lives. We are told that God created us to live in relationship with Him – and to respond to Him with thankfulness. Just as we were taught us to say ‘thank you’ when we’re given something, as God’s children we are expected to live lives that are characterized by thanksgiving: it is a response for the gifts/grace we have received from God. As Christians, ‘thanksgiving’/giving thanks is meant to be the defining mark of our faith/lives – it is how we give value/worth/significance/respect/appreciation to God for all that God has

done for us. The truth is, these are the gifts/blessings that should be first on our list/lips! But it's easy to take for granted the out of sight/mind things in our world/lives – but we do so at our peril.

*[Need-vs-Want:we enjoy both. Which is more essential? Need/BORING! God/blesses us with all that we need to live/enjoy life – but we 'want' more.... Wanting 'more' makes us unsatisfied-ungrateful. Desire/greed=wanting/hoping/"waiting for the wrong thing".]*

God is not opposed to our enjoying/taking pleasure as long as we remember that all we have is from God (nothing more/less) and should respond with awe/reverence/gratitude.(Ecc 3:12-14) The Matthew reading about the birds/air-neither sow/reap and lillies/field-neither toil/spin that don't "worry" about their needs because God provides for all their needs separates us from the rest of creation because we "worry/strive" for things while not placing our trust/faith in God's provision. The Colossians reading shows us the benefits of not worrying/being thankful:we get happier/healthier/holier! Gratitude/gratefulness/thankfulness leads to gracefulness/generosity/and giving more as we become closer to who God created us to be. Together, thankfulness/giving thanks builds up one another/the kingdom – we were blessed to be a blessing/"bear fruit"!

*[Word: "Enjoy": "delight/pleasure in"/"what have and benefit from". Thankfulness/giving thanks comes from taking delight/pleasure in/from the countless 'blessings' that we already have/benefit from. Also:Latin/"rejoice"-Old French/"give joy to". Our response to what we "enjoy" should be to rejoice/and give joy to/back to the giver by giving thanks/thanks-giving.]*

The Gospel of John tells us that; "From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another – grace upon grace."(John 1:16) As Christians we know that these gifts/blessings are ours from a loving/gracious God who is generous beyond what we need/deserve. In Jesus, God's love/care for us goes beyond what we merit: He sent Jesus to die on the cross so that we might be forgiven/saved to live in joy/enjoy with him forever. While this Thanksgiving feels very un-thanksgiving-like, let us look beyond what we can't have/do! This Thanksgiving – and beyond – may we be ever grateful to God for everything/gift/blessing. Amen.