

## Sunday, October 10, 2021 – Thanksgiving Sunday

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### Introduction

Today's readings reflect two of the strains that go into the celebration of a national day of thanksgiving: gratitude for abundant harvest (Joel) and civic prayer for a peaceable common life (1 Timothy). The core meaning of Thanksgiving for many of us—a home feast for extended family and friends—is not reflected in the readings; but it is reflected weekly in the church's meal of thanksgiving (eucharist). What we wish for both these thanksgiving meals is that they will go deeper than celebration of one another and our own blessings, to recognize in our true Host one who wants everyone brought to the table.

### Prayer of the Day

Creator God, your generous goodness comes to us new every day. By the work of your Spirit lead us to acknowledge your goodness, give thanks for your benefits, and serve you in willing obedience, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

### First Reading: Joel 2:21-27

*The prophet Joel understood that a locust plague that ravaged the land of Judah was God's judgment on the people, whom he then called to repentance. Today's reading points beyond the judgment to a time when God will bless the land and cause it to produce food in abundance.*

<sup>21</sup>Do not fear, O soil;  
be glad and rejoice,  
for the LORD has done great things!

<sup>22</sup>Do not fear, you animals of the field,  
for the pastures of the wilderness are green;  
the tree bears its fruit,  
the fig tree and vine give their full yield.

<sup>23</sup>O children of Zion, be glad  
and rejoice in the LORD your God;  
for he has given the early rain for your vindication,  
he has poured down for you abundant rain,  
the early and the later rain, as before.

<sup>24</sup>The threshing floors shall be full of grain,  
the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.

<sup>25</sup>I will repay you for the years  
that the swarming locust has eaten,  
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,  
my great army, which I sent against you.

<sup>26</sup>You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,  
and praise the name of the LORD your God,  
who has dealt wondrously with you.

And my people shall never again be put to shame.

<sup>27</sup>You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,  
and that I, the LORD, am your God and there is no other.  
And my people shall never again be put to shame.

## **Psalm 126**

The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad indeed. (*Ps. 126:3*)

<sup>1</sup>When the LORD restored the for- | tunes of Zion,  
then were we like | those who dream.

<sup>2</sup>**Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with | shouts of joy.  
Then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done great | things for them.”**

<sup>3</sup>The LORD has done great | things for us,  
and we are | glad indeed.

<sup>4</sup>**Restore our for- | tunes, O LORD,  
like the watercourses | of the Negeb.**

<sup>5</sup>Those who | sowed with tears  
will reap with | songs of joy.

<sup>6</sup>**Those who go out weeping, carry- | ing the seed,  
will come again with joy, shoulder- | ing their sheaves.**

## **Second Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-7**

*Christians are encouraged to offer prayers and thanks for all people, including rulers. We offer such inclusive, far-reaching prayers because God desires to save all people.*

<sup>1</sup>First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, <sup>2</sup>for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. <sup>3</sup>This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

<sup>5</sup>For

there is one God;

there is also one mediator between God and humankind,  
Christ Jesus, himself human,

<sup>6</sup>who gave himself a ransom for all

—this was attested at the right time.<sup>7</sup>For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

## **Gospel Reading: Matthew 6:25-33**

*In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught his disciples about the providence of God so that they would regard life with thanksgiving and trust rather than anxiety.*

[Jesus said,] <sup>25</sup>“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup>And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? <sup>28</sup>And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, <sup>29</sup>yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. <sup>30</sup>But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? <sup>31</sup>Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ <sup>32</sup>For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup>But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

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## Prayers of Intercession

God whose giving knows no ending, you invite the whole world to your table of mercy. Hear us as we pray for the church, the world, and everyone in need, saying “God in your mercy,” and responding, “hear our prayer.”

*A brief silence.*

God, you give all people a place at the table. Nurture and encourage campus ministries, new congregations, and workplace chaplaincies. Support all parts of the church that meet people where they are and offer accompaniment through daily challenges and joys. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You give nourishment to the birds of the air and the lilies of the fields. Sustain all creatures who rely on the earth for sustenance. Water parched ground, dry flooded fields, temper heat waves and frosts, and give sunlight and shade. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, you give wisdom to your people. Enlighten all leaders. Inspire and guide our prime minister (*name*), our premier (*name*), our local leaders (*name/s*), and all who represent us in our government. Give them patience and perspective to choose wisely for our common good. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, you give nourishment to those who hunger. Bring poverty and food insecurity to an end. Give dignity and adequate employment to those who are unemployed and underemployed. Sustain us all at your welcoming banquet of love and justice. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, you give community to those who are lonely. Be with our biological families, our chosen families, and our church family as we gather for the Thanksgiving holiday. Send your compassionate presence to those who are lonely, those who are separated or estranged from their families, and those whose loved ones have died. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, you give a feast of endless thanksgiving. We are grateful for the saints gathered at your table who have gone before us (*especially*). Unite us with them whenever we give thanks to you. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, your welcome is wider than we can imagine. Receive our prayers for the sake of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us.

**Amen.**

## ***A reflection for Thanksgiving Sunday...***

### Thanksgiving's Prerequisite: Humility

True thanksgiving requires humility. Our modern culture encourages us once a year to "be thankful" but seldom if ever says to whom. While there may be valid reasons in a diverse culture to avoid words and themes not all could embrace, the result is often a "thankfulness" that is, in fact, self-congratulation and self-satisfaction. It is then too easy to thank our political or economic systems, our national work ethic, or our favored-nation status. If at heart we believe we deserve the good we enjoy, we cannot truly be thankful to the giver and source of all we have and are. Without the humility to admit that everything, down to our most recent breath, is grace, a gift from our loving God, we are like the rich farmer in Luke 12:13-21, of whom God says, "You fool!"

Humility is noticeably absent in political campaigns, as witnessed in the election just past. Self-congratulation is the norm. And yet, in our second reading, 1 Timothy 2:1-7, Paul reminds us, "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity." It also takes humility on our part to pray for the flawed, human politicians who are willing to endure the degrading and exhausting process our elections inflict, in order to serve the larger, common good. People, institutions, friends, families, jobs, and circumstances do not need to be perfect or exemplary for us to be thankful for them. On this national holiday many gather for Thanksgiving worship in church settings that are strife- or tension-filled, in a culture that is deeply divided, in a nation long at war, and around family meals where hurts long past are still carried as burdens. It takes humility, grace, and love to be genuinely thankful in our real-life circumstances.

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