

Sunday, October 9, 2022 – Thanksgiving Sunday

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Introduction

Every gathering for worship has elements of thanksgiving. When we are nourished with God's bounty in holy communion, when we partake of Jesus' word that gives life to the world, and even when two or three of us simply join our hearts in prayer to make our requests known to God, we do so "with thanksgiving." Let us give thanks to God, who is good and whose mercy endures forever.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God our Father, 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 Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Deuteronomy 26:1-11

The annual harvest festival, called the Feast of Weeks, provides the setting for this reading. This festival celebrates the first fruits of the produce of the land offered back to God in thanks. As they bring their offerings, worshipers remember and proclaim God's gracious acts on behalf of Israel.

¹When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, ²you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. ³You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, "Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us." ⁴When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, ⁵you shall make this response before the LORD your God: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. ⁶When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, ⁷we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; ⁹and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD, have given me." You shall set it down before the LORD your God and bow down before the LORD your God. ¹¹Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house.

Psalm 100

¹Make a joyful noise to the LORD, | all you lands!

²Serve the LORD with gladness; come into God's presence | with a song.

³**Know that the LORD is God, our maker to whom | we belong;
we are God's people and the sheep | of God's pasture.**

⁴Enter the gates of the LORD with thanksgiving and the | courts with praise;
give thanks and bless God's | holy name.

⁵**Good indeed is the LORD, whose steadfast love is | everlasting,
whose faithfulness endures from | age to age.**

Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-9

Paul urges the Christians at Philippi to rejoice, to be thankful, and to dwell on everything worthy of praise.

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Gospel: John 6:25-35

The day after he multiplies bread to feed five thousand people, Jesus is pursued by the crowds clamoring for more bread. Recalling the image of manna in the wilderness, Jesus promises to provide the true bread from heaven that will never fail. Jesus himself is that bread of life.

²⁵When [the disciples] found [Jesus] on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” ²⁶Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ²⁷Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.” ²⁸Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?” ²⁹Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” ³⁰So they said to him, “What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? ³¹Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” ³²Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” ³⁴They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

³⁵Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Prayers of Intercession

United with your saints across time and place, we pray for our shared world, saying “God, in your mercy,” and responding, “receive our prayer.”

A brief silence.

We give thanks for the church in every land. Sustain the faithful with your living word. Inspire radical hospitality toward all who are searching, and call us into a more generous way of living. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We give thanks for the earth. Bring forth plentiful harvests and renew our commitment to share abundantly. Preserve the lands and waters that bring nourishment (*local water sources may be named*). God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We give thanks for leaders in our communities. Kindle a passion for justice and peace in every national and local elected official. Curb selfish impulses and guide us toward collaborative solutions. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We give thanks for all who provide for others. Sustain caregivers, social workers, and volunteers in their efforts (*individuals, congregational ministries, or local organizations may be named*). Provide homes, food, employment, and medical care to all who are struggling. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We give thanks for this congregation and those who plan worship. Guide deacons, pastors, musicians, and lay leaders in their creation of meaningful experiences. Instill in us a sense of joy and wonder when we come to worship you. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We give thanks for the faithful who now rest in you (*especially*). Teach us by their example and bring us with them into your loving embrace. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Accept these prayers, gracious God, and those known only to you; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

A reflection for this Thanksgiving Sunday...

Grateful to the Giver

TV shows and movies portray a Thanksgiving custom that is easy to copy. People around the table take turns naming things they're thankful for. They seem delighted to do it. It isn't hard for them, and their tributes bring smiles and warm feelings to others at the table. Maybe you have used this custom. It's a good start for a civic holiday. But there's more—don't forget the main course! The scripture readings remind the community of faith to center on the one "in the kitchen" who generously provides all the persons, places, and things we are thankful for. It's God who gives all the good gifts! There would be no gifts without the giver, no blessings without the one "whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from age to age" (Ps. 100:5). The first reading highlights God who as creator provides people with the land and its bounty, and as liberator gives them their story of blessing through time. Paul offers encouragement to connect with God by both asking and thanking. A needy "please" and an acknowledging "thank you" are two sides of the same coin, since God is always with us to listen and give us peace no matter what the situation. The gospel tells how God the giver moves even closer, becoming the gift itself. Embodied in Jesus, God nurtures and fulfills people with the bread of God's own life. We experience this in our church thanksgiving meal, also known as the eucharist (a name that means thanksgiving and gratitude). We "come as we are" to sit at table with God and find that God's generosity is able to flow into blessings for all.

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