



Sunday Worship

November 22, 2020

*Draw near to God
for God is waiting for you.*

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

We glorify our God with songs of thanksgiving and joy.

God has done great things for us, filling us with grace.

God fed our ancestors in the wilderness, God clothes us with hope.

We will offer our hearts to God, always saying, "Thank you!" to the One who loves us.

We will sing our praises, shouting of God's presence in our lives.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord of bounty and blessing, we come to you this day in gratitude for all that we have been given. We are grateful for the blessings and for the opportunities to be of service to others in your holy Name. Bless each of us here, that we may become truly blessings to others. For we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

HYMN #385 All People That On Earth Do Dwell

1. All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell. Come ye before him and rejoice.

2. Know that the Lord is God indeed; without our aid he did us make;
we are his folk; he doth us feed, and for his sheep he doth us take.

3. O enter then his gates with praise; approach with joy his courts unto;
praise, laud, and bless his name always, for it is seemly so to do.

4. For why? The Lord our God is good; his mercy is forever sure;
his truth at all times firmly stood, and shall from age to age endure.

CALL TO CONFESSION

We know that we have not lived as God hopes. But however fragmented we become, God longs to hold us together in grace and peace. Let us come with our prayers of confession and need to the One who prepares the way for our words.

PRAYER OF BROKENNESS AND CONFESSION

God of Grace, we bring to you our ingratitude for all that you have done for us: our impatience when prayers are ignored, our selfishness when prompted to give or share, our unfaithfulness when wandering from your way. We ask for your forgiveness, through Jesus Christ who gave all so that we might learn to do likewise. Amen.

WORDS OF BLESSING AND ASSURANCE

This is the good news: God intends for us to find life, to embrace hope, to receive forgiveness through Jesus Christ, our Servant. The end of our journey is not rejection and emptiness, but the fullness of grace and hope in

our God. Remember this good news and say with me: Jesus died for me. Jesus forgives me. Jesus loves me. Jesus is good to me. Amen.

GLORIA PATRI

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

FIRST SCRIPTURE LESSON Psalm 95:1-7

- ¹ O come, let us sing to the Lord;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
- ² Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!
- ³ For the Lord is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.
- ⁴ In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his also.
- ⁵ The sea is his, for he made it,
and the dry land, which his hands have formed.
- ⁶ O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
- ⁷ For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.

TIME WITH THE CHILDREN

HYMN #694 Great God of Every Blessing

1. Great God of every blessing, of faithful, loving care, you are the fount of goodness, the daily bread we share. How can we hope to thank you? Our praise is but a start: sincerely and completely I offer you my heart.
2. Your Word is our salvation, the source of endless grace, in death and life extending your covenant embrace. In Christ we are one body; each member has a part: sincerely and completely I offer you my heart.
3. Your Spirit is our teacher, the light that guides our search, transforming broken people into the holy church. For feeding us with mercy, for wisdom you impart: sincerely and completely I offer you my heart.

SECOND SCRIPTURE LESSON Galatians 6:7-10

⁷ Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. ⁸ If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. ⁹ So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

SERMON Thanks-living

Rudyard Kipling was a British poet whose writings have blessed many people. Rudyard Kipling was a very famous writer even before he died, and made a great deal of money at his trade. A newspaper reporter came up to him once and said, "Mr. Kipling, I just read that somebody calculated that the money you make from your writings amounts to over \$100 a word." Mr. Kipling raised his eyebrows and said, "Really, I certainly wasn't aware of that." The reporter cynically reached into his pocket and pulled out a \$100 bill and gave it to Kipling and said, "Here's a \$100 bill Mr. Kipling. Now you give me one of your \$100 words." Rudyard Kipling looked at that \$100 bill for a moment, took it and folded it up and put it in his pocket and said, "Thanks."

This is not an example of “cheap talk,” or is it. It can be said that “Thanks” is a valuable word, but sometimes it’s cheap. Ever since my grandchildren were born, our family has had the habit of saying before meals “God is great; God is good. Let us thank him for our food. Amen.” We started this habit because it is a simple prayer that is easily learned and should be in the repertoire of every person of faith. The problem is that now they are a bit older the tenor of that prayer has changed. To say that my grandchildren are competitive would be putting it mildly. They fight for who gets to start the prayer and what usually happens is as soon as one starts to ask, they all run through the words at lightning speed so they can claim “being first.” The words themselves have become meaningless and it is all about the competition and stealing the winner’s circle. After a chastisement, I remind them to whom they are speaking and just what it is they are saying. We then repeat the prayer, slower and with a little more reverence. I sigh and try to find comfort in the knowledge that they may not get what they are saying, but there are lots of opportunities to teach what those words mean.

“God is great; God is good. Let us thank him...” Thanks. It’s an expression of gratitude or an acknowledgement of services or favors given. We thank God and we say “God, we’re so thankful, we’re so grateful for all that you’ve done for us.” What’s behind those words? What backs them up? If it is an expression, then how do we express it or acknowledge it, give it meaning?

If we’re thankful it really ought to show in our lives. It has been said that there’s no other sin quite like the sin of ingratitude. Shakespeare said, “How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child.” Those of you who have loved and labored and invested much in the health and lives of your children know how grieved you are when your children do not seem to appreciate or to be thankful for the sacrifices that parents have made. Mothers who have gone down in the valley of the shadow of death to bring these precious children into this world and dads who have labored long and hard, what a sacrifice. The poet Milton, the blind poet, said that a person with an ungrateful spirit only has one vice because all other vices are virtues compared to ingratitude. Every other sin is a virtue compared to the sin of ingratitude.

It has seemed natural, at least here at Forest Grove, to have our annual Stewardship campaign end as we approach the national holiday of Thanksgiving. In and of itself, this holiday isn’t a Christian holiday. Turkey, football, parades and the National Dog Show aren’t what we as Christians think of when we think of thanksgiving. It is more like what the Psalmist says in singing praise to the God who created and holds all things. It is about worshiping and bowing down before God recognizing that we are sheep and God is the good shepherd who tends and cares for the flock.

When we think of our stewardship, we begin by remembering to whom all belongs and give thanks. Not with turkey, but with our lives, time, talent and treasure. It isn’t just a word. It is active gratitude. So what does that look like?

Stephen Crotts gave a recipe for thanksgiving which, seems appropriate for this time of year. It goes like this: take a mixing bowl and several simple ingredients. It is not a very complex recipe so it doesn’t take four years in culinary school to make it. Simple ingredients. Start with the mixing bowl. Your very life can be that container. Here’s what you put in it first. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” So the first ingredient in this happy Thanksgiving recipe is thanksgetting.

Now “thanksgetting” may seem like a Christmas thing, but think about it in terms of the old hymn, “Count Your Blessings.” Remember how that song goes, you are to count them one by one. A few weeks ago I asked you all the question about what makes a good day. Pat Gessner responded by saying that a good day is one where she notices and appreciates little things like water from the shower and the food she eats, communication with friends - and at the end of the day, she expresses her gratitude to God. Little things that provide for her happiness and wellbeing. Think about it yourself. What do you have to be thankful for? I’ll bet none of you went to bed hungry last night. None of you slept out in the cold unless by choice. Consider your health and availability to receive healthcare when needed. Consider the people who are dear to you, their smiles, hands, hearts. Take a look out the window of wherever you are. What do you see? Look at your screen or your phone, think of the technology we are using and the minds of those who made this possible.

When we count our blessings one by one we just have to thank God! Our list of blessings is longer than your arm! We feel like the country woman who said, "The Lord has blessed me so good He's done filled my cup and run it over into the saucer, too!" That's thanksgetting. And even in this pandemic time, politics forming deep divides among us, our blessings still keep coming especially in the little things that seem so insignificant to the outside world but in reality are what make life worth living. So start your thanksgiving with "thanksgetting." Let's pause for a moment and see how much thanksgetting we can find. After all, there's no use going on with our recipe if we cannot find all the ingredients. How about you? Can you find any thanksgetting? Is there something for which you would like to say thank you?

Next, Crotts would say that we are to add a heaping amount of "thanksgiving." You don't have to be particular about it. Just stir it right in there along with the thanksgetting. Use the same bowl. It will be big enough to hold it all.

Now it's easy enough to thank God for the healings, the food, the peace, the luxuries God sends our way. But how about the setbacks, the pain and grief? Can we be thankful for them, too? 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." This is not just an isolated verse either. The same recipe is taught in Ephesians 5:20. There, God says, "Always and for everything give thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father."

What is the first thing we should do when something upsetting happens? When we feel like the blessings have quit flowing? Consider the Apostle Paul for a moment. In our Thursday study and fellowship we have been looking at what all happened to him. After his conversion to Christianity, he started churches. He was the pastor of many growing churches. He went from town to town and was well received. Things were great! He had plenty of food to eat. He was safe, healthy, and quite satisfied. Then came a call to Macedonia. And Paul went. But what happened? He and his companion, Silas, were rejected by the Macedonians. He was brutally beaten and thrown into jail. If that had happened to most followers of Jesus today, they would have rattled their chains in self-pity and said something like this: "Well, God, you sure didn't know what you were doing this time. Just look at me! I gave up a high-paying job for this!" But that is not the route Paul took. The Bible says that Paul and Silas started singing hymns to God around midnight. Here they were beaten, bloody, and in jail, and trust me, Roman jails were not a country club. They were completely dark, dank and no amenities. Yet Paul and Silas were praising God from thankful hearts. If you read Acts 16, you will see how God received glory by their actions. The Philippian jailer and his family were converted to Christianity.

Now I'm not saying that we should seek suffering or that suffering is part of God's plan. I don't believe that our good God would ever will bad things for God's beloved creation. But let's face it, there are times when the blessings seem to quit flowing. Again, turning to responses I received from you about a "good day," Brad shared his good day that sounded like anything but. His pool collapsed and the wind made it exceedingly difficult to get it up again. He got stopped by the police for outdated registration. All this while work was piling up, his kids needed help with school due to the pandemic and he just wanted to get to the polls and vote. Yet, at the end of the day, he recognized that in fact God was still with him, even in and especially through the mess and he found peace.

So, why be thankful to God during times of misfortune? Because the Bible commands it. "Rejoice always," says 1 Thessalonians 5:16. Why give praise to God continually? Why be thankful at all times? Because gratitude is a powerful healing force. Praise is an acknowledgment of God's goodness. It is faith, pure and simple. Thanksgiving replaces complaint with satisfaction, self-pity with joy, and whining with creative love. Those who refuse to praise God and live with thanks during difficult times will grow bitter and pessimistic. But those who live thankfully will open themselves up to God's blessing. God can put their faith where it will be seen. Others can be blessed as well. All things work together for good. If our recipe for a happy Thanksgiving is going to be complete we have to have some thanksgiving. Do you have any? Will you praise him from the prison of some affliction like Paul did? That is real thanksgiving!

The final ingredient, says Crotts, is "thanksgiving." This ingredient includes the scripture verse that reads, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." We'll need about a gallon of this ingredient. Giving is nothing new

especially in this holiday season. It's why we have "Giving Tuesday," public television pledge drives and stewardship campaigns at this time. We are already more oriented toward giving. Giving is a joy. It is such a privilege. Why, anytime we catch ourselves feeling really good and warm inside, if we check we will often find that it is due to our giving to others. Jesus promised to bless the giver. If you give a single apple seed to the soil, you will reap an apple tree and thousands of apple seeds. Truly when we give, our blessings are multiplied. As Jesus put it, "It is in giving that you receive." As Paul put it, "you reap what you sow."

On the radio a reporter was conducting one of those man-in-the-street interviews. Out among the pedestrians he was asking, "What are you thankful for?" Some were grateful for their health. Some gave thanks because they had good jobs to provide for their families. One man was even thankful because the doctor said he could eat all the turkey he wanted. But the most enchanting remark of all was that of a young girl who said, "I'm thankful I'm going to see my grandma so I can tell her how much I love her." Now that is really thanksgiving. It is going beyond mere thanksgiving and thanksgiving. It is taking your eyes off yourself and focusing on another.

This spirit of giving to others from thankful hearts is perhaps the attitude which created the first Thanksgiving anyway. During that first holiday there was no turkey or pumpkin pie or cranberry sauce. The colonists were very poor. Epidemics and a harsh climate had thinned their ranks drastically. It was the Native Americans who helped them to survive. They had taught them to fish and build winterized huts. They showed them the secrets of fertilizing corn crops with fish. And come harvest time they all sat down for a three-day festival of thanksgiving and thanksgiving and thanksgiving. The five surviving women in the settlement provided food for the combined party of 140.

Just as the Colonial era was a time for thankful giving, so now is a time for giving on our parts. It is a time for the world of plenty to help the world of need. It's giving our time, talent and treasure. This is how we express our gratitude to the God who gives all. This is how God blesses a joyful giver.

First, let us recognize the giver of all things to whom our grateful lives are given. Let us affirm our faith using the words of the Apostle's Creed.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

*RECOGNIZING OUR STEWARDSHIP PLEDGES AND OFFERING
PRAYER OF DEDICATION*

Bless, O God, all the financial resources that will pass through our hands in the year to come. May our planning be wise, our spending be faithful, our giving be joyful and our saving offer peace of mind. Keep

us from waste, worry and regret, remind us always to be sensitive to the needs of those who have less than we do, and let justice and compassion guide our earning and our investing.

God we have received grace upon grace. It is grace to experience the joy of giving, and it is grace to participate in the ministry of this community of faith here and elsewhere. Help us to keep these promises of support, but to be honest and open with any need to release them.

Amazing Grace – as we give, we are not less, but blessed. Amen.

DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise him all creatures here below; Praise him above ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Holy and Gracious God, we give you thanks for family, friends, life, love—for all the blessings you have bestowed upon us. (*name blessings and thanksgivings*) In your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of our Mothers and Fathers, your desire for us leads the way. May we have the ears to hear the cries of this world, responding with your hope. In Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Compassionate One, fill us with your love that we may see deeply all the needs around us (*name the hurts, needs, and hope you are carrying*). Help us to care with your heart. In your mercy, hear our prayer.

May your love, your grace, your compassion, your mercy, carry us away this day, and lead us with love to be your hands and heart in the world. Amen.

HYMN #643 Now Thank We All Our God

1. Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things hath done, in whom this world rejoices;
who, from our mothers' arms, hath blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.

2. O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;
and keep us in God's grace, and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills in this world and the next.

3. All praise and thanks to God, who reigns in highest heaven,
to Father and to Son and Spirit now be given:
the one eternal God, whom heaven and earth adore,
the God who was, and is, and shall be evermore.

BENEDICTION

The Creator of heaven and earth sends you out. Go forth being help to all around you.

The Bringer of grace sends you out. Go to offer hope and healing to the broken.

The Spirit of peace sends you out. Go to bring reconciliation in all the broken places.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever. Amen.

