

THANKSGIVING: LIFE BLOOD OF FAITH OCTOBER 7, 2007

Thanksgiving is this wonderful weekend when we celebrate the bounty of God's earth. Being here in the County, we are surrounded with examples of the richness of nature and the beauty of the vegetation. God's bounty provides a wonderful backdrop to all we do when we live in this part of the world.

Today is also World Wide Communion Sunday, the Sunday when the main Protestant churches throughout the world celebrate the great gift of Christ, when he sat with his disciples before his death and asked them to remember him through the act of breaking the bread and drinking the wine or juice.

The traditional thanksgiving celebration with the church filled with vegetables and fruit, needs to be broadened today. The majority of the citizens of earth reside and work in large urban centres and are not near to the farms where produce and animals are raised. So, as we consider thanksgiving, let us enlarge our thinking to include all the gifts of God – talents, work, communications, community.

Also we need to enlarge our thinking as it relates to Holy Communion. It is not a singular act we do here in our congregation, but an act that ties us in to the church universal, past, present and future. It is God's people who give praise for the wondrous acts of love shown to us by God.

In Psalm 100, we read: "Shout to God, all the earth, worship with gladness and joy, Come before God with laughter, our maker to whom we belong."

The psalmist reminds us to give all we have in joy to God in our praise and thanksgiving. No room for timidity here. He ends the psalm with these words to God: "You are always gracious, and faithful age after age." Are we always gracious and faithful in our life? Do we hold back as we praise God or allow ourselves to be truly joyous in our worship of God? Thanksgiving allows all we are and have to be offered to God freely and without restraint, for all we are and have are gifts from God.

We read Paul's wonderful words to the church in Philippi. He reminds us to rejoice in the Lord always, whatever the set of circumstances we may be experiencing at this time. Be not anxious, he cautions, but bring your requests before God who is there and listening. He ends by saying God's peace which is beyond all our ability to understand, will keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Truly as the old hymn says: blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.

In our Gospel reading from John, we have Jesus stating clearly that he is the bread of life. When we come to him, we are safe in the knowledge that Jesus is the key to life and a close relationship with God. This symbolism of being the bread of life plays out as well in the act of the Lord's Supper. He said: "he (or she) who comes to me shall not hunger, and he (or she) who believes in me shall never thirst."

Surely we have much to give thanks for as Christians including gratitude for those who through the years of our life have shared their faith with us and also with those who have allowed us to administer unto them. As we sit here this morning, we feel the presence of the saints who have worshipped here before us. This is all part of the heavenly hosts that the bible mentions surrounds us always.

On this Thanksgiving Day, let us take the time to truly give thanks for the blessings of this life. Take the time to remember people by name and consider anew what they contributed to your life. Think of the lessons in kindness, consideration, joyous living and faith they imparted to us by their words and their actions. These memories remind us of our responsibility to also share who we are and what we believe with those around us.

The biblical writers remind us again and again that thanksgiving is a key aspect of our faith; in fact it is the life blood of our faith. It is only in giving thanks that we lift ourselves above our worries and preoccupations. Giving thanks to anyone who has blessed us is a soul refreshing act, a reminder that we do not live in isolation, but as a part of a physical family or community. Give thanks willingly, without reservation, and the peace of God will be with us. Accept God's gracious forgiveness and live as a forgiven person, free from the burden of guilt and self-loathing.

Jesus invited all to sit at his table as his guests. Come and gather together, let us eat and drink together in joy and love. When you do gather in my name, said Jesus, do this in memory of me. The wondrous thing is that we have memory of him not as a dead figure of history, but as a Lord alive and eager to walk with each of us in our life's journey.

Thanksgiving Sunday and World Wide Communion Sunday, combined this year in our church calendar, an unique opportunity to celebrate our faith with those millions of Christians in all parts of the world who also call Jesus Christ Lord and Saviour. Thanks be to God for this wonderful opportunity to celebrate, worship and give praise to a God whose love is everlasting. Amen

Rev. Gary Magarrell