

Thanksgiving 2018

As this Thanksgiving Day approached, I began a morning ritual. I hope I can continue it. It is one I commend to you.

It is not hard. It doesn't cost any money. And, it makes no great demands on your time.

Indeed, it is very simple. What is it?

As soon as you wake up, before you even get out of the bed, think of at least one thing for which you are thankful.

It might be something as simple as having a warm bed. Not everyone does.

I been in enough large cities to have seen many sleeping in entryways of buildings on a pile of rags or a blanket.

Psalm 92 says:

“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord . . .

“To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night.”

And, of course, that is what we are doing today – giving thanks, but my preliminary point is that giving thanks is something we should do every morning and, indeed, as the verse tells us, every night.

What are some of the things for which we will give thanks. Well, that will vary from person to person, but there will many overlaps.

I might summarize some of these common themes, calling them the five ‘F’s:

Food, family, friends, freedom and faith.

I begin with food because it, along with certain other bodily needs, is the most basic.

Many of you will be familiar with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the standard depiction being a pyramid.

At the very bottom of this pyramid is food and like physiological needs.

The reason that physiological needs are at the bottom is not too hard to see. It would be hard, for example, to commend a system of government which includes freedom to a group starving for food.

Before they can think about freedom, they need something in their bellies. Everything else can wait.

So, let's begin this morning by being thankful we have food, and, from the looks of things downstairs, we have much food.

Not everyone does, which should prompt us to be mindful of the needs of those less fortunate.

We have number in this church who volunteer at the local food bank and who work in a community garden. Keep up the good work! With such doings the Lord is well pleased.

Let's move to the second 'F' -- family. And to that one, for the sake of brevity, let's add the third -- friends. And consider these two together.

Human beings were made for community. Psalm 68:6 begins with the words:

“God setteth the solitary in families.”

Families and friends can sometimes be difficult. Conflicts are always possible and even probable when you have more than one person in a room; nevertheless, life would be intolerable if everyone lived on his own little desert island.

So, let's include family and friends in our thoughts this season and indeed every day. They enrich our lives. They teach us how to live in community. They prepare us for heaven.

But, what about the fourth 'F'?

The fourth 'F' stand for freedom.

As we think about freedom, so let us think about county. How fortunate we are to live in in a free land. Surely that is something for which we ought to be very grateful.

It occurred to me as I prepared this message that today -- Nov. 22 -- is the very day President Kennedy was shot 55 years ago.

Freedom is fragile. As you give thanks for it, pray that violence and discord may be restrained in our land.

Finally, there is faith – the fifth ‘F’.

The dimension of faith adds so much to our lives. It tells us that we are not alone on this journey and that there is cosmic plan.

The God in whom we profess faith has come down into our muddle and lived among us. He has done something to break the cycle of sin and death and to bring us to a new plane of existence.

More than that, we see signs that He is in the world today, working through us and in His Church.

I told someone this week that if I didn’t believe in God already, I would have to after having been here at St. Luke’s for three decades.

Specifically, I was thinking about how God has provided not just monetary resources, but people.

At every juncture in our history, God has raised up the right person at the moment to do whatever needed.

Preble and Isabell Staver for founding this church.

Tick Johnson for drawing a plan which would become the basis of the design of this building.

Bill Mundy for directing the building of the 1995 church.

Bob Jennus for the 2011 addition.

And it continues. Many of these do their work without any great fanfare.

They tend the Altar. They keep the financial records. They oversee the grounds of this facility. They work to create programs of educations. I could go and on.

Whatever the need. Here they come. Who raises them up?

I believe verily that it is God. Let us give thanks for our faith which is in evidence all around us.

As I have already mentioned, Psalm 92 says: It is good thing to give thanks . . .

Why is it a good thing to give thanks?

This would be my answer: **Giving thanks is humanizing.**

What do I mean by ‘humanizing’?

Simply this: Giving thanks turns a self-centred person (the person we all tend to be at time) back into the people God intended us to be.

To be really human is to be in harmony with God as our Creator, with creation and with other human beings.

Thanksgiving helps us to achieve this harmony. So, let us give thanks this morning for food, for family, for friends, for freedom, for faith. And, in so doing, let us learn how to be truly human, the people God wants us to be.