

**26 Pentecost
November 18, 2018
Jazz Vespers**

**In the name of the God of all creation,
The God alive in each of us as God was alive in Jesus,
And the power of God known in the Spirit.
Amen.**

What is a Thanksgiving without looking at Norman Rockwell's iconic Saturday Evening Post cover of the Thanksgiving turkey being put on the table by Grandma? Uncle Bill, Aunt Sue, and all the cousins are there, with Dad peaking in from the corner ... or is the Norman Rockwell himself?

Anyhow, I imagine the Thanksgivings today may look a lot different. Instead of the dining room, dinner is served in the great room separated from the kitchen by a counter. The kids are all looking at their smartphones, Grandpa is watching the football game on the big screen TV mounted on the wall, and Uncle Charlie and Uncle Matt are arguing about ... well, you can guess. And Dad peaking in from the corner ... he is actually taking a selfie of the whole mess.

But Thanksgiving can be a real opportunity to pause and give thanks ... in spite of our distractions and differences of opinions. Special days to give thanks is not under the sole ownership of the United States. Special opportunities to express gratitude are as old as humanity ... and our bible reflects that in many of its readings.

Those readings are about God's bounty that has been bestowed upon this Creation. With that bounty comes a responsibility ... to give thanks by praising God ... and by sharing that bounty with those in need ... sharing this bounty because we don't own the bounty ... we are just its stewards.

Psalms 100 ... which we just recited ... is one of the first Bible verses that I ever learned.

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
go into his courts with praise; *
give thanks to him and call upon his Name.*

As well as the reading we just heard, the author of the Book of Deuteronomy implores us:

When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness.

And then Paul in his second letter to the Christian community in Corinth offers this:

God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. ... You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us.

All too often it is our anxiety about whether there will be enough for ourselves that keeps us from sharing what we have with the world around us. And then we justify this position by looking upon those who are in need as less than us ... and less deserving.

The fact is that we are all created in the image of God, regardless of station in life; wealth or lack of wealth ... talent or lack of talent; education or lack of education. We are all created in the image of God regardless of the color of our skin, or our ethnic background, or sexual orientation, or any of the many other factors that are used to separate one from another. The fact is that we are all created in the image of God, and we are all blessed by God in one way or another.

Those who are blessed with much ... of them more is required. Our thanksgiving for the blessing and bounty that has been bestowed upon us is expressed in our actions, not just our words. It is expressed in our sharing of that with which we have been blessed, not just our sympathy for those who have less.

Later this week we will be celebrating our national holiday of Thanksgiving. "It is the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." That is how our Catechism defines a sacrament. Let us remember on Thanksgiving that we have been blessed ... and remember by sharing that blessing and our bounty with those who have less and are in need. And then let us remember that giving thanks to God for the blessing and bounty that is bestowed upon us is not just reserved for one day a year ... it is to be remembered and acknowledge at all times in all we do.

Amen.