

**Jazz Vespers
November 17, 2013**

**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.**

The lessons for this evening's service are taken from the lectionary for Thanksgiving Day. They 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.

The author of the Book of Deuteronomy tells us in three short verses:

For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. You shall eat your fill and bless the LORD your God for the good land that he has given you.

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 talent ... or lack of wealth or lack of talent; education or lack of education, or the color of our skin, or our ethnic background, 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.

In a just a week and a half we will be celebrating our national holiday of Thanksgiving. "It is the outward sign of an inward and spiritual grace." 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.

This Thanksgiving season I invite you to listen to Paul again:

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.

And then find a way to "share abundantly" with another ... possibly someone that you don not even know ... so that they may have something to be thankful about. Do a "random act of kindness." Share compassion with "one of the least" of God's children. Don't be stingy ... don't be selfish ... "sow bountifully" as Paul puts it. Make a difference in another's life so that they truly have something to be thankful for this Thanksgiving.

According to Paul: *You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity,*

I close with a short piece from my wife Caren's book Healing words ... this is from Gratitude:

Several years ago, the phrase "random acts of kindness" became popular. Many of these acts were very small, simple ones that made a difference in the recipient's life. Professor Rudolph Arnheim tells this story about his lasting gratitude for one such kindness: "At a faculty reception, a British lady taught me how to tie my shoes with a double knot so that they keep tied more securely and still come apart in a jiffy," he said. "Kneeling on the floor in the midst of chattering sherry-sippers, she tied my shoes. I remember her twice a day ever since."

Amen.