

**Worship Service for October 10<sup>th</sup>:** 20th Sunday after Pentecost – Thanksgiving Sunday

- **Old Testament:** Joel 2:21-27
- **New Testament:** Matthew 6:25-33
- **Psalms:** Psalm 126

**Announcements:**

- Wednesday October 13<sup>th</sup>: Session Meeting @ 7pm
- Wednesday November 3<sup>rd</sup>: Bible Studies Acts 1 in St. George's P. C at 7pm.

**Sermon Title: Replace Worry With Thanksgiving!**

I stumbled upon an interesting list on Seven Things To Be Thankful For and it said the following:

1. For automatic dishwashers. They make it possible to get out of the kitchen before the family comes in for their after-dinner snacks.
2. For husbands who attack small repair jobs around the house. They usually make them big enough to call in professionals.
3. For the bathtub: it's the one place the family allows Mom some time to herself.
4. For children who put away their things and clean up after themselves. They're such a joy you hate to see them go home to their own parents.
5. For gardening. It's a relief to deal with dirt outside the house for a change.
6. For teenagers. They give parents an opportunity to learn a second language.
7. For smoke alarms. They let you know when the turkey is done.

Hopefully no one here has turkey in the oven right now as we are in church. If you do be rest assured that your smoke alarm will not go off while you are in church. Please focus and be at peace. And like our passage is telling us today, do not be anxious or worried about that turkey, it will not burn.

The verses before the passage, Jesus had been teaching his disciples not to store up their treasures on earth but to store them in heaven because where their treasures were was where their hearts would be. And then he goes on to tell them in the passage we just read, not to worry about life, what they will eat or drink or wear. Listening to that, we might think that's a difficult commandment to follow. How can we live without worrying? How would we survive?

In the days of Jesus, life wasn't easy. It was way harder than today. They lived in a very insecure world relying on their little farms and most of them possessing the barest essentials of life. The majority of people were struggling and were not sure how the weather would go during the farming season and what harvest they would get. Their insecurities led them to be anxious about what they would eat or drink. If we remember very well, there was even a time after Jesus' death when the disciples went fishing and caught nothing the whole night, until Jesus appeared and instructed them to throw their nets on the right side. These were professional fishermen and I'm quite sure they had thrown their nets in all directions throughout the night. Meaning that if not for the miracle of Jesus they would have gone home without nothing to feed their families (John 21:6).

Imagine therefore, how they would receive such a message to not worry about what they would eat or drink or even wear. However, Jesus was not saying that they shouldn't be concerned about their lives but that their concerns shouldn't develop into worry. And he gave them several reasons:

- Because the Father who took care of the birds would take care of them because they were more valuable and
- Because their worrying wouldn't change anything.

Instead of worrying we are told to seek God's kingdom. What better person to seek than He who would provide for us?

The past 18 months have been very challenging and there is still a lot of uncertainty looming around. Nobody knows for sure when this will all end, not even the government that we look up to. We have every right to be concerned about the things that are happening around us and especially this pandemic which is a global issue. However, Jesus Christ is saying that those who are worried and anxious have little faith.

The Bible says faith is believing in the things not seen and our passage is telling us that if God can feed the birds of the air, He can take care of us because we are more valuable in His eyes. Do we believe the Word of God? If we do then we will not worry or be anxious. We will be at peace because we know that God is in control. It is sometimes quite challenging to be at peace, but we can come to our Father and ask Him for the grace to be at peace.

Instead of worrying God is calling on us to be concerned with the things of the kingdom. We are advised to be committed to the will of God.

One way that we can show God that we have faith in Him is through thanksgiving. We can make up our minds to start thanking God for those issues that cause us to worry. Thanking Him that we know that He is in control of the situation and that He will bring us rest. Today, I am encouraging us to not only thank God for the things that He has done for us but also for those things that are challenges in our lives. And as we do so we are going to see how anxiety and worry is going to gradually disappear and be replaced by peace.

Most of us have inaccurate views of gratitude which pays attention only to one aspect, usually narrowing it down to feel good emotions that come and go in our lives. It is this confusion that makes it so difficult for us to choose to engage in thanksgiving as a way of life. When we get depressed or anxious or stressed, we are less likely to feel gratitude as an emotion.

Thanksgiving is a habit of awareness that reshapes our understanding of God, ourselves and the world around us. In other words, we can choose to be grateful people and establish practices that develop thankfulness into a lifelong habit. In the process we become happier, healthier and experience less worry and anxiety. When we adopt thanksgiving as a way of life *it becomes an essential tool to help us overcome worry and anxiety.*

In ancient Israel the people followed the instructions in Leviticus 7:12-15 which says “If they offer it as an expression of thankfulness, then along with this thank offering they are to offer thick loaves made without yeast and with olive oil mixed in, thin loaves made without yeast and brushed with oil, and thick loaves of the finest flour well-kneaded and with oil mixed in. <sup>13</sup> Along with their fellowship offering of thanksgiving they are to present an offering with thick loaves of bread made with yeast. <sup>14</sup> They are to bring one of each kind as an offering, a contribution to the Lord;

it belongs to the priest who splashes the blood of the fellowship offering against the altar. <sup>15</sup>The meat of their fellowship offering of thanksgiving must be eaten on the day it is offered; they must leave none of it till morning.”

This passage was an outline of how the Israelites could give thanks to God. They had to bring 40 loaves of bread (30 unleavened loaves of bread & 10 leavened). He was also required to select his finest lamb or goat and take these things to the Temple in Jerusalem where he would offer his thanks to God. At the Temple he would offer about 5 of these loaves to the priest with the lamb or goat which would be sacrificed fully to the Lord. When the lamb was cooked, the priest would perform the sacrifice of thanksgiving and when he was done would offer the cooked lamb to the Israelite who had come to offer thanks to God. They were required to eat all of the sacrifice of bread and lamb the very same day and not leave it until morning.

What the Israelite would do was to call others, his family, friends and even strangers to join him in giving thanks to God and sharing his meal with him. As they ate, he would recount to them his reasons for thanking God, giving God the glory for all He had done in His life.

God is teaching us today to seek His kingdom first and all other things shall be added unto us. This thanksgiving as all other thanksgiving we are going to have huge amounts of turkey that we will be cooking for ourselves and our families. We could decide to offer some of this meal to our neighbours and those in our communities as we share with them what God has done in our lives. That is another way of bringing the gospel to people, letting them know that God is always in control and that we should have faith in Him. God tells us in the Bible that if we seek Him we will find Him if we seek Him with all our hearts. As we celebrate thanksgiving this year, let us make sure to thank God from our hearts even as we glorify Him and bless others.

What are those things we that make us worry or anxious as individuals, communities and as a church? how has 18 months of pandemic affected you? God's Word is encouraging us to seek first His kingdom in thanksgiving and all other things shall be added unto us. God is telling us today to not be afraid for He has everything in control. He is assuring you and I that He will be there for us always and will never

forsake us. Let us put our trust in Him today as we seek first His kingdom knowing that all other things shall be added unto us. Amen.

### **Prayer**

Dear Father God, before Creation you spoke. You spoke into the void and there was. You spoke and there was light, darkness; waters, land and sky; the plants; the sun, moon and stars; the animals on land, fish in the sea and birds in the sky; and you made us. As the hymn says, "Father long before creation, you had chosen us in love. And that love, so deep, so moving, draws us close to Christ above." And that love "will keep us, firmly fixed in Christ alone."

And then you God, Creator God, spoke to us and you said to us: Do not worry. You are mine. Lay all of your burdens down at my feet. Do not focus on the worries of tomorrow. I love you. Give me your burdens, sorrows; your tiredness and loneliness and I will give you rest. Likewise bring me your joys, your laughter and know that all that is good comes from me.

You said, know that in both the sadness and the joys, no matter the results of our human choices – I have a plan for you. And it is a good plan. And I will work through this world that has been thoroughly twisted through sin. I will work through my Creation, and through you. I will work out my plan for righteousness and you will know that I am God. You are mine.

God, how do we respond? Are we able to keep the sheer enormousness of that in our minds as we live our daily lives? Do we bring it all to you? Are the words of our mouths, the mediations of our minds pleasing to you?

No! God, we come to you in confession, speaking what you already know. We do not honour you every day. We do not live lives that are fully transformed. We do not remember you in our activities, speak of you in our conversations, and determine our actions based on your teachings to us.

Lord, though undeserved by our actions yet granted to us in grace through death on the cross, we bring before you our concerns and our requests.

Lord, we think of those who have lived with a cancer diagnosis and gone through the treatment process. We pray for those who carry the ongoing fears of cancer,

those who carry the grief of loss as a result of cancer, and those who love people carrying these fears. Be with them all.

Lord, we think of those who live daily with other ongoing diagnosis. Be they of hurt heart, of hurt mind, of aching and worn body and so much more. Help us all to lay these burdens down at your feet and accept the rest and peace that are yours that you freely want to give. And when we pick them back up, help us to lay them back down again, and again.

We pray for farmers and farm workers as they steward the soil and work to grow and harvest food. We pray for smallholder farmers who are suffering the effects of climate change, and we give thanks for Presbyterian World Service & Development partners that are striving to end hunger.

We bring before you our joys! Our church year has started again and our programs are gradually starting up. We bring you such thanks for our volunteers and leaders. We bring you thanks for the participants. We bring you thanks for the work that goes into creating these programs. We bring before you thanks for those in our congregation who work quietly in ministry. We bring them before you in prayer too. We receive the results of their service, often with too much questioning and not enough thanks. Lord, may we hold them up in our prayers. Remember to speak the thanks that we have doubly and bring our concerns and cares to you first. Help us to grant these appointed servants with the same grace that you extend to us.

Generous God, we bring our offering with thanksgiving for all the goodness we enjoy in Christ and in creation. Bless these gifts and use them to relieve the need and anxiety many feel these days. Use us, too, so that lives filled with tears may see signs of your love and joy in what we can offer.

We bring before you our brothers and sisters in Christ outside the walls of this Sanctuary. May we remember the needs of Your Church. We here are only a tiny portion of those you chose long before Creation.

Lord we bring before you your creation. You created an amazing world that has been so thoroughly tainted by sin and destruction. It is easy to see both the effects of sin, but also how truly amazing you created this world. We thank you that we can place our worries about our world in your hands and then pick up the work of

being your agents of change and transformation without worry. Help us as we do this through our daily work and activities. May we honour you in what we do.

Lord, this is but a few of our prayers. There are words that haven't been spoken. Needs that we can rely on the Holy Spirit to advocate for us on our behalf. For you have provided for us in this need too.

Father God, you are a good, good Father. You have chosen us and we have responded. By your grace, through the advocacy of the cross, hear our prayers, Lord, hear our prayers as we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our friend who taught us to pray and say:

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

### **Benediction**

May the blessing of God – Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, encourage and strengthen you in every good word and deed both now and forever. Amen.