

## David Forshee ~ Giving Thanks

Thanksgiving Eve, 21 November 2019

Grace Episcopal Church

Thanksgiving is an annual opportunity to pause and remember. As we partake in the bounty of food, family, and friends, we purposefully stop to say thank you. In this intentional slowing down of life to say thanks, we have the opportunity to reframe and retell the truth that we are not at the center of life. That the things we have are gifts which are to be stewarded and the people we are with are a treasure. Realizing this is important, but it is the first step. If we stop with this realization we fall short and miss out on the larger narrative. It is not enough to simply give thanks for the things, but we must go one step further and attribute those gifts to the Giver, the Lord who has bestowed the gifts and the responsibilities of stewardship upon us. Our attention moves from the individual gifts to the Lord of all. Our thanksgiving turns to praise.

But there is even more! As Matthew 6 points out, our reflections of the past and present carryover to our view of the future. Although worrying about the future is common to all and seems natural. We find Jesus commanding us not to worry. But is this actually possible? The Good News is that yes- it is possible!

As we recognize the past gifts, opportunities, relationships, and stories we better understand the character of our Loving God. We remove ourselves from the middle of the story as the instigator and creator and see that we are receivers and created ones. We lift our eyes beyond ourselves and place them upon the the Lord. As we see, know, and experience God we can then look forward with confidence and hope that He will continue in His ever present, never changing character. We don't have to worry about tomorrow for we know who He is and what He has done in the past. Not only in our own reflections but as we listen to the stories of others. And this is why it is a

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communal approach to Thanksgiving. As we gather with others, we take turns telling stories and sharing what we are thankful for spurring one another on.

So as we gather around the altar, we pause, we reflect, we remember. Not only what God has done for me, but what He has done for you, for those who have come before us, and those who will come after us. We remember the words and actions of Jesus Christ which demonstrate God's character of selfless love given for us all. Giving thanks to God draws us together in community.

It also sends us out to share the Good News with others. We have family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and classmates who have forgotten about the past provision, who worry about current circumstances, and who fear tomorrow. They have forgotten the stories of the past that point to a God who has created them, made a covenant, and is their Good King. We have an opportunity not only tomorrow, but each and every day to call these loved ones to pause, give thanks, and remember the One and Only Lord and Savior.

Giving thanks to God creates community as it draws others into praise.

Praise be to God for the great things He has done.

Amen.