

Giving Thanks

Matters of Faith: Part 5 “Giving Thanks”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – November 22nd, 2020

Christ the King and Thanksgiving Sunday

Readings: Deuteronomy 8:7-18; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15; Luke 17:11-19

Reflection: Psalm 65

Greeting: Trust in the Lord and do good. May the Lord give strength to the people! O taste and see that the Lord is good! God is our refuge and strength. Praise the Lord!

Prayer: O Lord our God, you are always more ready to bestow your good gifts on us than we are to seek them, and are willing to give more than we desire or deserve. Help us so to seek that we may truly find, so to ask that we may joyfully receive, so to knock that the door of your mercy may be opened to us; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 65

To the leader. A Psalm of David. A Song. Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion; and to you shall vows be performed, O you who answer prayer! To you all flesh shall come. When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us, you forgive our transgressions. Happy are those whom you choose and bring near to live in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple. By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas. By your strength you established the mountains; you are girded with might. You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples. Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs; you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy. You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it. You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness. The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy. (Psalm 65 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 65 and hear praise and thanksgiving. We read of God's generosity in all things. We hear how we are provided for. What are you thankful for? How do you show that you are thankful for God? How do you share in that joy? In what ways do your prayers reflect your gratitude for God's blessings? What about how you treat others?

Prayer: God, our generous benefactor. We seek your abundance to sustain us. We look to your mercy when we have failed you. Grant us the selflessness that we may share in all things. Help us to always be thankful for the many ways that you watch over us. Grant us the faith we need to continue to follow you. May your steadfast love and generous mercy be with us always and everywhere. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading is from Deuteronomy chapter 8, verses 7 through 18.

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. Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. 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, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good. Do not say to yourself, "My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth." But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today.
(Deuteronomy 8:7-18 NRSV*)

Our next reading is from 2 Corinthians chapter 9, verses 6 through 15.

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And 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. As it is written, "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has

*given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!
(2 Corinthians 9:6-15 NRSV*)*

Our final reading is from Luke, chapter 17, verses 11 through 19.

*On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."
(Luke 17:11-19 NRSV*)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Our final message in our Matters of Faith series looks at giving thanks. Thankfulness is most certainly a part of our faith. We may sometimes just think of it as something that we should naturally be doing, that we should just be thankful. But it is a great matter of our faith because of what that thankfulness leads to. One of the themes that we see in our readings for today is that part of being thankful is also being generous and being selfless. Those are important things to be as part of our faithfulness to giving thanks. Because one of the things that we give thanks for is all that God has given us. To truly be thankful for it, we have to share those things.

We see this in our reading from Deuteronomy. The people are told when they have settled down when things are going well, don't forget who it was that got you here. Don't think that you did all of this yourself. Don't think that you've done all this so that you should be proud. But remember that it was God that helped you get there. And to remember your difficult times, so that you can be thankful, and you can be generous. And it's important because these were people who suffered a lot. A people delivered from slavery, delivered from terrible fate. But yet, there's that worry that as generations go on and as people start to forget, people forget how they got there. And people forget their community. And we see this echoed and Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth. Paul talks about how if you are generous then you'll receive the reward for that. That as you give, more will be given to you. That you shouldn't feel that you have to give and that it's some sort of compulsion, that you're forced to give. But that you should give generously and then you should always do it with God in mind. Because if God provides then you should be able to provide for others, knowing that God will always help you. And so, it echoes that message that we get all the way back in Deuteronomy, that we never forget that we're thankful because God has provided enough that we can provide for others. That we can share in those blessings, so that it overflows. So that as we give thanks, we give thanks to God that we can share.

In our Gospel reading we get a picture of people forgetting to be thankful. Ten lepers, keeping their distance, are calling out for mercy for healing. Jesus commands them to go show themselves to the priests and they all scurry off. As they go, they're healed. Now, the thing that helps us to get an idea of this is the one who notices turns back praising God with a loud voice. So, one of the things that that we might imagine with this is that the others would have heard him and seen that he turned back if they were all together when they left. But only one turns back. And Jesus wants to know, you know, I thought there were ten of you? Where are the other nine? And it's only this Samaritan, the outsider, the foreigner that has turned back to praise God and to be thankful. And so, there's a couple things that we might be able to take from that. Maybe the others didn't want to follow him because of his status. Maybe when he turned back, they thought, "Well, I don't want to follow that Samaritan." And we see that pride got in the way of truly giving thanks, because they didn't want to be in the company of the outsider. But we do get a very poignant statement at the end of our Gospel reading, "get up and go on your way. Your faith has made you well." He believed. They came, they asked, they received. They received because they asked. And they were given to generously.

For me, these tie together a picture of what it means to give thanks. That it's an active thing. It's not just saying hey God, thank you for everything. Because though that's important, that's how we start. Much as I have said before, if our prayer is it, we aren't quite living up to expectations. Because prayer is always the beginning. Even if it's the end of one cycle, it's the start of another. But if we are giving thanks to God in our prayers, then we need to reflect that in our actions. After we give thanks, we demonstrate our faith that God will always provide by sharing what we have. And it's important that we do that because it's how we demonstrate that we understand the gift that we've been given, and that we are truly thankful because we don't just hoard it away. We don't say "well, God gave this to me and it's all mine." And I think that's sometimes where we run into problems. We're thankful for all we've been given, but we start to think that maybe it's because we're special that we've been given this, or God helped us, but we did so much of the work too. Maybe God met us halfway. And the problem is that we start to let our pride get in the way of being truly thankful. Because part of being thankful is being selfless.

That's one of the interesting things that we can see. We've talked about emulating Christ in what we do. And one of the things that Christ did was heal that he gave without asking anything in return. Jesus never seeks payment. He heals because it's the right thing to do. He gives because it's the right thing to do. If we are going to be thankful for what we have and truly be thankful, then we too must be generous with what we've been given. Because if we are grateful for the grace and the mercy that God has shown us, then we show that grace and mercy to others. Because we're thankful. And you know that's a big part of how we build community. The early Israelites trying to build a new community in the new land were thankful and they came together to celebrate and to share. So that all could celebrate. So that all could be thankful. That even those that may have been having a difficult time, when they came

together, when they acted together. They all had something to be thankful for and good all share together. We see it throughout the Bible, that often those that are the most thankful are those that have the least to share, but yet they still share. And one of the things that I think we have to always recognize is that when God has been good to us, we find a way that we can help extend that so that we can be good to others. And it doesn't have to be things that we get. We often think about it as being generous with our money but it's also being caring with our actions. That we know that we can work for others because of our blessings. It also means taking care that we don't neglect others because God has been good to us.

This where that selflessness comes in as part of our faithful thanksgiving. Because when we think about God being good to us, we think about the fact that God has shown his grace to us in so many ways. Since sacrifices have been made on our behalf, we're expected to learn and grow and be able to do. That if sacrifices are made so that we can know God is with us and that God has been generous to us that we find a way to be generous with our care and our compassion. We find a way to be selfless, so that our actions are for the benefit of others. And this comes in a lot of forms. And what it really comes down to is once again that great commandment of loving God and loving your neighbor as you love yourself. That we're able to have empathy. We need to be able to step outside ourselves and see if we reflect the love of Christ in who we are. And you know, I have to admit, sometimes it's hard because we get caught up very easily in a lot of ideas. That you're supposed to look out for number one. And that everybody is responsible for their own actions, which is true. However, we have to remember that Christ doesn't see us that way. If Christ sees each of us as responsible for our own actions and that we had do everything for ourselves, there would have been no sacrifice on the cross. No act of love to show that even when our actions run contrary to what's best for us, that Christ will still act with our interests in mind. And we must be able to do the same because if we are thankful for the love that God has given us, we must show it. And if we are thankful for the blessings that God has given us, we must share them. And if we are going to be responsible people living our faith, we must be selfless in the way that we give so that others may see the life they can live because we're not called to judge people for the things that they have done and decide whether or not they're worthy of our generosity. We are called to be generous in spite of those things. Because they are still deserving of love. Because we are still deserving of love from Christ. And if we are to emulate Christ's love for us, then we show that love to others, showing our thankfulness by giving others something to be thankful for. And that comes back to us because we know in our hearts that when we're selfless and we do the right thing and help others we know we have followed in our Savior's footsteps. That we're doing our best to live a life that shows that we are thankful for all that God has done, because we can never be too grateful for all that God has given us and all that God has done. You I know I'm thankful for the fact that I have a roof over my head that I can put clothing on my kids backs. That there's food on the table. I have friends and family and I am thankful for wonderful, loving congregations that are always there to help. And my faith comes into that when I try to give others the same experience I've had, that they may know that same love, that they may know

that same gratitude, so that we can all be thankful together, that we may all stop to praise God for the wonderful things he's done. That we may turn back and praise the Father, for being there in our lives that we may be grateful for our Savior's love deems us. We give thanks, that the Holy Spirit is there for us whenever we call on him.

In this time of thankfulness, as we get ready for Advent, we prepare our hearts in joy and gratitude for the coming of our Lord and Savior into this world. It's important that we remember all the things that we do have to be thankful for. And then think of all the ways that we can share it and show it, that we may show why we are thankful. That we may live our great faith not by showing why we are special, and why we are above others, but humbling ourselves to know that for all our mistakes, God is there for us and that God helps us to be there for each other. So, let us live our lives as a people full of thanks, showing mercy and love and grace at every opportunity because we are thankful for the mercy and love and grace that God has shown us. That we be a people thankful for the sacrifices made by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that we may show that love to others. So that we may give. So that we may grow. So that all may know the joy that comes from following our God. That we may all be truly blessed. That we may all be a people who give thanks, joyfully and happily, with generous hearts and open arms. For all. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: We confess to you, all-knowing God, what we are. We are not the people we like others to think we are. We are afraid to admit, even to ourselves, what lies in the depths of our souls. But we cannot hide our true selves from you. You know us as we are, and yet you love us. Help us not to shrink from self-knowledge. Teach us to respect ourselves for your sake. Give us the courage to put our trust in your guiding power. Raise us out of the paralysis of guilt into the freedom and energy of forgiven people. And for those who through long habit find forgiveness hard to accept, we ask you to break their bondage and set them free; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: We go forth now in faith and peace. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Until we meet again. **Amen.**

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Angie Veach	Diane Washburn	Eric Veach	Cathy Devall
Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Hayden Kanizer	Henry Catey
Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison	Nancy Sowers	Cindy Cisney
Patti Corder & Crew	Nancy Hoke	Don Wells	Tricia Adkins
Ronnie & Elaine Carlen	Don Stewart	Anne Winkler Heinrichs	Bill Gilbert
Michael & Makenzie Reynolds		Ronnie Winstead	John Millsap
Family of Jim Croy	Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons	Family of Sheila Holsapple
Family of Ron Helmink	Trinity Powers	Family of LeRoy Wetzell	Richard Durham
Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family	Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd
Lois Woolever	Mary White	Nick Nichols	Leo Smith
Bonnie Hite	Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts
Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte	Kim Hennes	
Residents of the Greenup Nursing Center			

Rev Camron D St. Michael

<https://stmichael.pw>

cdstmichael@outlook.com

(316)530-3182 (call or text)

PO Box 54, Charleston IL, 61920

* Scripture quotations are from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

+ Scripture quotations are from the Common English Bible, Copyright © 2011 by Common English Bible.

Our Current Series – Matters of Faith

This series looks at different aspects of our faith journey and how we live out our faith in Christ.

October 25th – *Born Again* – What it means to live a new life in Christ.

November 1st – *Journey's End* – A reflection on life to come.

November 8th – *Salvation* – A discussion of how we are saved.

November 15th – *Work and Faith* – The relationship between faith and works.

November 22nd – *Giving Thanks* – Why giving thanks is a faith matter.

11/22/2020 Update from Pastor Cameron

Greetings! I'm returning with a weekly update this week because of a change in our situation here in Illinois.

We are suspending in person worship through December 13th. That may end up being extended, and I will have that information as soon as it is available.

Due to an increase in cases across the state, we are doing our part to do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God by suspending in person services. This is not an easy decision, but I know that local health officials are worried about overwhelming the hospital system here in the area. With an increase in Coronavirus hospitalizations, we run the risk of all health services being slowed down and delayed. To do our part, we are helping to lead by example. To do the most we can to help our community, we will worship apart for now. We have online worship available in video, audio, and in a print version. I pray that we will see cases go down again so that we may resume in person worship.

I do want to give a special thanks to all of you that have been a part of our in-person services. Everyone has been doing a wonderful job of following the best safety practices and showing a love for each other that way. I am proud of you all, and thankful for all of you.

If you know someone who would like to receive printed information every week, please let me know. If you come to this online, feel free to share it.

The church is still active and working, and as such, still needs your financial support. Please contact me or the church treasurer for options. Thank you for your continued support.

Please see the CDC website for information on the Coronavirus or the IDHP website for information about the current Illinois situation and restrictions.

Please stay safe. You are all in my prayers. I will keep you updated as best I can. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your Church Council Chair or myself.

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael

<https://stmichael.pw>

cdstmichael@outlook.com

(316)530-3182 (call or text)

PO Box 54, Charleston IL 61920