

Trinitarian Congregational Church
TAKE OUT
Thanksgiving and Stewardship Sunday
November 22, 2020

Announcements

Prelude: “Come, Ye Thankful People Come” Lynne Walker
arr. Mark Hayes
[Video <https://youtu.be/rxqEsZNavv0>]

Call to Worship

Leader: Come, let us bless God, who crowns the year with bounty.
Let us rejoice in the One who fills the world with good.

People: We give thanks to God, who has richly provided for us.
We exult in God, whose faithfulness is everlasting.

Leader: Come, bow before God, who has answered our prayers.
Let us remember the grace God has shown to us.

People: We praise God, who sustains us throughout life.
We worship God, whose mercy fills the earth with hope.

Leader: Come, let us renew our vows to God in this hour.
Let our thanksgiving overflow in works of service.

People: We honor God, who has blessed us with all we need and more.
We glorify God, whose Spirit lead us to share all God’s blessings.

***Gathering Prayer**

Gracious God, who supplies us with every blessing in abundance, lift up our hearts in gratitude and thanksgiving. Awaken us to perceive the gifts we seldom notice, the bounty we take for granted, and the rich possibilities you provide. Stir our hearts to care deeply for people in need and strengthen our commitment to helpful action. Be with us in the hour that we may grow in your grace and rejoice in your love for us and for all people. Amen.

Gloria Patri [Video - <https://youtu.be/OLz3R1hnUjs>]

Scripture Reading 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 Kathy Wright

⁶The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And 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. ⁹As it is written,

“He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever.”

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; ¹² for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ 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, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Stewardship Moment

Today we make our pledges with joyful hearts knowing that God is the giver of life and the source of our well-being. And with profound humility we acknowledge that God appoints us as stewards of his abundance and the caretakers of all He has entrusted to us. Our faithful stewardship bears witness to the love of Christ in our lives, and extends God's blessings to all people.

Stewardship Prayer: Generous and loving God, You call us to be disciples of your Son Jesus and good stewards of all your blessings. Today we offer you the promise of our tithes and gifts; and with them the desire to live a life of true stewardship marked by faith-filled prayer, service to our neighbor, and generous sharing. Fill us with your Spirit that we may grow in Christ's likeness. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Luke 17:11-19

Kathy Wright

¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, ¹³ they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" ¹⁴ When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. ¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. ¹⁶ He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? ¹⁸ Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

Special Music

"Thanksgiving Eve"

Patter Field and Ted Thornton

Bob Franke, adapted

[Video https://youtu.be/_efdDMlCe-A]

It's so easy to think of the days gone by,
It's so hard to think of the times to come.
But the grace to accept every moment as a gift
Is a gift which is given to some.

CHORUS

*What can you do with your days but work and hope,
Let your dreams bind your work to your play.
What can you do with each moment of your life
But love til you've loved it away,
Love til you've loved it away.*

There are sorrows enough for the whole worlds' end,
There are no guarantees but the grave,
But the life that we live and the times that we spend
Are a treasure too precious to say.

CHORUS

*What can you do with your days but work and hope,
Let your dreams bind your work to your play.
What can you do with each moment of your life
But love til you've loved it away,
Love til you've loved it away.*

Sermon

“The Journey of a Thankful Heart”

This week we will be celebrating a very special holiday – Thanksgiving. But this holiday will be anything but the traditional day of feast and festivities. Most of us will not be sitting around a table with a crowd of family and friends, some of us will even be sitting home alone. And we all know why – Covid 19. The covid pandemic, along with so many other disasters and difficulties, has made 2020 a hard year for us. And yet in the midst of all this we are told – “Give thanks to the Lord, for the Lord is good.” And indeed, God is good, even when things do not seem to be so good.

The truth at the heart of all thanksgiving is the realization that “God is good, always – in everything and in every way – God is good.” But truth also be told – we don't always feel that way. Sometimes we are awed by the awareness of God's love and blessings, and we joyfully give thanks. At other times all we can see and feel is the pain and challenge of life, and God's goodness seems a distant memory. And sometimes we are so preoccupied with minor things that the awareness of God's grace slips right on by.

So perhaps we can come to today's Scripture with some empathy and honesty. Perhaps we can recognize ourselves when Jesus is approached by ten lepers. Now, to be a leper is Jesus' day was a horrible thing. It was to be an outcast living on the outskirts of humanity. The diagnosis of leprosy was like sentence of exile. Their houses were torn down, their possessions burned. And the lepers themselves would have been shunned, avoided - as the saying goes - “like the plague.”

So it is no small thing when these ten lepers beg Jesus for mercy. And Jesus, being Jesus, skips the formalities and commands them “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” I'm not sure how I would have taken that word from Jesus, after all the lepers were still lepers, nothing yet had

changed. But all ten went as they were told; they did as Jesus said. And along the way, down the road of faith and obedience, all ten were healed, all ten were restored, all ten were given new life. And they did what any one of us would do if you found yourself walking into a brand new life, a day of hope after a life-time of suffering; they sprinted to the finish line, to the priests and then on home to family and friends and new possibilities.

But one of them stops, overcome by this new promise, overwhelmed by such an immense and gracious gift. He couldn't just follow Jesus' instructions. Rather he chose to follow his heart, a heart filled with joy and gratitude. And so he wheels around and runs back to Jesus, "praising God with a loud voice," and then falling at the feet of Jesus, he offers him his thanks and praise.

Now were the other nine ungrateful, selfish souls? No! I think they were just as grateful. But I also think that they were so focused on their blessing that they missed the one who blesses. These nine were Jews, and so for them the temple, with its priests, were the place to give thanks to God. But for the one, the Samaritan (an outcast from the Jewish faith), the temple was not the focus. The Samaritan could see beyond the holy rites and sacred places to see the Holy and Sacred One.

I've known some people who have been able to 'see beyond the good' and recognize the glory. I know a man who miraculously survived cancer, who found his life and relationships altered by a profound gratitude and lived with a deep graciousness toward life. I met a mentally retarded woman going to a worship service in Pennsylvania who had no gift of money to bring for an offering, who instead offered an astounding song of thanksgiving and praise. I knew a couple in which the husband was shot during a robbery, who in spite of years of great medical expenses and a demanding regiments of care, nonetheless saw it as a profound gift of God's grace, proclaiming joyfully, "every day now is a blessing."

When I'm at my best I too can see beyond the 'here and now' and recognize the God of glory in the midst of life; whether it is in the beauty of a day, or the warmth of a hug, or an act of kindness – I sense God's love; but at other times – not so much. At those times, whether I am struggling through difficulties, or distracted by demands, or just in a funk – on those days thanksgiving is illusive and thin.

And yet God accepts our words of thanks regardless of how they come. God knows our hearts and God sees our souls. And God's loving, living Spirit sneaks up alongside us as we walk along the road of life, whispering songs of promise and courage, hinting at healing and hope, and stirring in us an awareness of the loving grace of God; until we awaken and rise up and run with joy to offer our praise and thanks to our Savior and Lord.

On this day, through this week, and for all our day, may all our spirits be lifted up in thanksgiving to our gracious and glorious God.

Amen.

***Hymn**

"For the Fruit of All Creation"

Chris Harris

Fred Pratt

[Video <https://youtu.be/WLXOe2MoXCo>]

For the fruits of all creation, thanks be to God;
for the gifts of every nation, thanks be to God;
for the ploughing, sowing, reaping, silent growth while we are sleeping,
future needs in earth's safe-keeping, thanks be to God.

In the just reward of labor, God's will is done;
in the help we give our neighbor, God's will is done;
in our world-wide task of caring for the hungry and despairing,
in the harvests we are sharing, God's will is done.

For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God;
for the good we all inherit, thanks be to God;
for the wonders that astound us, for the truths that still confound us,
most of all that love has found us, thanks be to God.

Joys and Concerns

As you meet with God in prayer, please lift up the joys and concerns shared through the Trumpet Blast. God is eager to be your help and strength, to listen to you and meet your needs. Prayer is a gift we can always use.

Prayers of the People

Amazing, Gracious God, on this great day we offer you our thanks and praise. You have blessed us richly, not only with an abundance from the earth, but more so with the abundance of heaven. We thank you for your faithfulness and goodness and grace. We thank you for the gift of salvation and the gift of your abiding presence. We thank you that you care, and in caring fill our lives with all we need and more. And so, as we come with our thanks and praise, we also seek to honor you with our very lives, serving you by caring for your world.

We pray, for your church and for this congregation. May we always hear the whispers of your grace and sense the presence of your love. And as the song of gratitude wells up in us, may it overflow to become a tangible source of blessing for all people.

We pray, for all who are called on to lead the nations. May they attend to your command of peace and attune themselves to the sound of your justice, that all people may rejoice in your abundant goodness. And fill us, who have known your abundant blessings, with hearts for justice and mercy that will strive to serve your good purposes in our world. We pray also for all those suffering today. May the sick feel your healing touch, the sorrowful sense your comforting presence, and the poor receive your generous aid. On this day we especially thank you for.... and we ask your continued support for...

We praise you, Holy God, for the amazing depth of your goodness to us, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray...

The Lord's Prayer

Choral Response [Video - https://youtu.be/lAivVHv_abc]

Offering

This is a time of thanksgiving and praise. We make our offerings and pledges as a jubilant response to God, who deals so wondrously with us. With faith and hope and joy, we give ourselves to his ministry and invest our resources towards his good purposes, today and every day, that Christ may be glorified. To that end let us dedicate our gifts.

O God, we thank you for the many blessings we receive from your hands; for prosperity and love, faith and hope. We rejoice to be called as your people and to live as your servants. In this sacred act of giving we acknowledge your rightful claim over our lives and all our possessions. Receive these offerings and use them to extend your many blessings to all the world. Amen.

Doxology [Video - <https://youtu.be/5I7PEGUPAXQ>]

Common Commission

Let us go forth into the world in peace, being of good courage, holding fast to that which is good, rendering to no one evil for evil, strengthening the faint-hearted, supporting the weak, helping the afflicted, honoring all persons, loving and serving the Lord, and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

***Benediction**

Go now into the world,

And may our most generous God...bless you in every way, so that you may grow into full-formed lives, robust in God, and generous and gracious to all; ...and so bring forth great praise and thanksgiving to God. 2 Cor 9:10-11 the Message
adj

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, Amen.

Postlude:

“We Give Thanks”
Wendy Luella Perkins, arr. Sue Perkins
[Video <https://youtu.be/Cc0hotvnE-g>]

Lynne Walker

Oh, we give thanks, for this precious day, for all gathered here, and those far away; for this time we share, with love and care, Oh, we give thanks for this precious day.”

