

November 20 2016

Scripture Lesson

Psalm 100

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Philippians 4:4-7

Sermon *Give Thanks*

The passage from Deuteronomy that Nina read for us today reminds me of what I have read about the first Thanksgiving in America. The first one was held by the Pilgrims after a good harvest in their new country, America. It was their way to celebrate and give thanks to God for good crops so that they would make it through the upcoming winter. Likewise in Deuteronomy, the fruit of their harvest in the new land that God had led them to was given to God in thanksgiving for the bountiful harvest that they received. In both cases, the people were giving thanks to God for the blessings and bounty that they had received. God was there for them and provided what they needed.

With Thanksgiving only a few days away, I am sure we are all working out the details of the Thanksgiving dinner that we will eat. Some of us will be the hosts of the dinner, some of us will bring food to add to the menu for whoever's home we are going to in celebration of Thanksgiving. Some of us may stay home and have a quiet day, an extra day off from work, a day to recoup, watch a little football or a favorite movie. No matter what we will be doing on Thanksgiving we need to remember why we celebrate the holiday and use it for a day to give thanks to God for the blessings that we have. The Israelites were thankful to God for leading them out of Egypt and to a land of milk and honey. The Pilgrims had sailed across the Atlantic Ocean to a new land where they could follow their beliefs. They were thankful for having a good crop to feed the people in their settlement.

This brings me to here, this place where we come to worship on Sundays. I would say that we have a good life, our needs are provided for and we have enough to enjoy our lives as they are. Sometimes I think we forget to realize that we do have a good life which is much better than many lives in the United States and all over the world. I realize that it is all relative but I think at times it is good for us to be reminded of how well we do have it. I hope you read the article in the Miner about Ruth and her work with the ladies of Malawi. She worked to help them learn a trade so that they could have an income to improve their quality of life. What struck me in the article was the statement that the ladies live on a dollar a day. That isn't even enough to buy a cup of coffee in most places anymore. I am sure the ladies that Ruth worked with are thankful for her help to make their lives a little easier.

I received a catalog in the mail from World Vision. World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization and is similar to the Heifer Project in what they provide to people in need. We know that people all over the world need our help and we as a church family are very generous in what we give to help people close to home and all over the world. It is amazing what they can provide with a small donation. For instance \$50.00 will provide \$600.00 worth of school supplies for children in the United States. \$25.00 will buy \$300.00 of clothing and other necessities to children in the U.S.

The point I am trying to make is that sometimes it takes so little to do so much. We need to remember that. We need to remember to thank God that our lives are so blessed. We need to remember to do all that we can do to help those in need wherever we see the need, even in our own backyard.

Most importantly though, is to remember to be thankful each morning when we wake up to face a new day. Thankful for our lives, thankful for our health, thankful for our families and friends, thankful for all that we have. We don't know what the day will hold for us, what God has in store for us, things can change so quickly. We can feel ill and end up having to have emergency surgery. We can take a tumble and end up with broken bones. We can lose someone close to us in a blink of an eye.

I gave a message near Thanksgiving about 4 years ago. It was about blessings. I would like to share part of that message with you again.

Blessings can't be earned, they are a voluntary gift. However, what we as Christians do is important. God wants us to be holy, he wants us to live right and he wants us to serve in His body. He doesn't want us to serve to earn our blessings, or to serve out of guilt and fear. God wants us to serve out of love. We need to remember the words of 1 Peter 3 that Jim read to us today. "Have unity of spirit, sympathy, and love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called; that you might inherit a blessing."

Our church is rich in the blessings that we give to others. We help our community in many ways by giving to Rural Resources, Crime Victims Services, Y.E.S., and the local food banks to name a few. We reach out to the world by giving to O.C.W.M., and the Shoebox Ministries. We do this out of our love for our fellow people.

We are a welcoming, friendly place for the people that come to visit us. We are blessed when these visitors stop being visitors and become a part of our church family. We are blessed by the love that is felt as soon as we walk into this place.

As you celebrate this coming Thanksgiving Day however you are going to celebrate it, remember the blessings in your life and remember to give thanks to God for those blessings.