

Homily – The Value of Gratitude

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Tonight we gather together to worship God and give thanks. We give thanks to God for the many blessings that we have already received. This place in California that we get to live in, our church communities, our resources, and our families. We give thanks to God for the blessings we know about, and the blessing that we don't know about. When we take time to think about it, we are blessed in so many different ways.

And, how can we forget the blessing of rain. A moment ago we heard Gerti read from the Book of the Prophet Joel. Do not fear, O soil; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things! Do not fear, you animals of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit, the fig tree and vine give their full yield. O children of Zion, be glad and rejoice in the Lord your God; for he has given the early rain for your vindication, he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the later rain, as before. Like ancient Israel, here in this part of California we are very aware of the blessing that rain and water are to us. Thank you God for the rain.

Now, two months ago, during our class on civil discourse we were going through one of those exercises in which one identifies your top three values. The list had 40-50 values, and I had to choose three. The first two were easy – spirituality and balance. If you were doing the exercise, then you might pick other values, but for me the top two were spirituality and balance.

I had a harder time selecting a third value. There were a lot of good options. Family, friends, finances, health – there were a lot of good options, but I selected gratitude.

Now, the difficulty that I had in selecting gratitude is that I may value it, but I don't do it nearly as much as I should. As we heard John read from Paul's letter to Timothy, "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions,

and thanksgivings be made for everyone” I may value gratitude, but I need to do more of it.

And, here are a few things I have found to help me to be more grateful. First, upon waking in the morning, I try to remember things for which I am grateful to God. I do this in a simple prayer. God I am grateful for warm showers. I am grateful for dogs. I am grateful for the beauty of the hillside outside the window. Thank you God.

And, I often do this gratitude prayer on my drive to church in the morning. Though sometimes “help me” prayers are also part of my drive to church. Thank you and help me. Last week on one of my drives to work, I told God I wasn’t going to ask for help on anything. And then thirty second later, I decided I was going to ask for rain anyway. God bring us rain, and make it gentle and safe. And, protect all of those that are homeless during the rain. Bring us rain.

And here is a second gratitude practice. When someone does something, remember to say thank you. Thank you for helping. Thank you for leading. Thank you for getting something done. And, for good measure thank someone who hasn’t done anything. Just say thank you for being.

So, even though I don’t do gratitude nearly as much as I should, I am going to keep gratitude as my third value. But, I am also going to work at it.

This evening, I invite you to consider gratitude as one of your primary values. Most of us forget that joy is a by-product of gratitude. So to have a joy-filled live we must remember to be grateful.

The Psalmist and prophets give us timeless words on how to express it. Jesus models it both in his life and in his death. And, the Apostle Paul give us clear instructions to live a life of gratitude. Our world sorely needs gratitude.

So, as Paul wrote to the early church in Thessalonica “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” And, Happy Thanksgiving!