

HARVEST THANKSGIVING SUNDAY

Joel 2:21-27; Psalm 126; 1 Timothy 2:1-7; Matthew 6:25-33

Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name; make known among the nations what He has done. Bring an offering and come before Him. Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever. Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for us in Christ Jesus.

After we eat and are full, give praise to the Lord our God for the good land He gave you. Make sure that we never forget the Lord or disobey His laws and teachings that we have heard in our Scripture readings today.

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving Day and a question arises: with the turmoil in our world, what do we have to be thankful for? There are many in our Province and our world who are struggling with illness, some of whom are facing death. There are those for whom Thanksgiving is just another day of loneliness. How can they give thanks?

Many churches today will be decorated with baked goods, squash and pumpkins, multi-coloured leaves, corn, dog berries and other produce, including jars of all the good stuff like pickles, jams and jellies. Families will get together and sit down to bounteous feasts of turkey with all the fixings, including homemade desserts. We will reward ourselves, those of us who can, with the bounties and fruits of the harvest. We will even remember those less fortunate than ourselves. And we will be satisfied. And that's good, but it also might be bad.

It's good because it is right that we should feast and thank God for what He has given us, it is right to celebrate and to share the bounty of the earth and sea, it's good to express appreciation and to rejoice over the goodness of God. But it also might be bad, depending on our overall attitude and approach to life, to what God has done for us and continues doing for us.

Some of us might remember the old Ma and Pa Kettle television series, way back when television was black and white? In a classic scene that was to be found in many of the episodes, Ma Kettle would bang the triangle on the porch, and from every corner and crevice around the yard hordes of screaming, yelling children would pour into the house fighting for a place at the table. Then Ma, with a twinkle in her eye would holler, "Hold it!" and everyone would freeze in silence. Pa Kettle would roll his eyes heavenward, tip his hat, and say, "Much obliged". And immediately the melee began as abruptly as it had stopped.

God calls us to much better than a tip of the hat. God calls us not only to a day of thanksgiving, as he has called his people from the time of Moses, He calls us to a life of thanks-living.

The difference between thanksgiving and thanks-living is between giving thanks on one day of the year and living thanks every day. Thanksgiving is an annual celebration. Thanks living is a way of life for every day.

Giving thanks is important. When we give thanks as a community, as a family, we are reminded of all the good things and all the good people that we have been given or gifted with.

We remember that we have been blessed, we remember that there is a greater good than ourselves, if only for a moment or a day. But the temptation is to then return to our self-sufficiency, to forget God, to say to ourselves, "my strength and my ability have gotten me thus far in life", and then to yearn for more, and

to expect it as if it were our right and our privilege. We see it in our children. For a moment they are ever so grateful when we've given them a gift. But usually they quickly forget their thankfulness.

Are we so different than our children? Don't we always want more or better or newer or stronger things? That's the impression we can get from watching the ads on our television screens. We fill our lives with things, only to find out that there is no such thing as perfect fulfilment.

This is where thanks-living comes into the picture. We begin to "live thanks" when we open our lives up to God and give God the first place. As we do this, as we humble ourselves before God and acknowledge that He is the source of all good things, our awareness of our blessings increases, our joy becomes fuller, and we find ourselves in an attitude and state of grace.

Like Abraham and Sarah, we discover we have been blessed to be a blessing. Our continual thankfulness for our blessings will turn into a lifetime of living thanks, of living the blessings and sharing the blessings, because we know in the deepest parts of our hearts, that God is the giver of it all.

In our church each Sunday we are dismissed, or commissioned if you like, to go forth into the world to fulfill our calling as the people of God, with words such as "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord". It would be a very short step to add, "blessed to be a blessing, and living in thanks for the life we have received".

As we give thanks this Thanksgiving Day, remember our calling to be joyful always, to pray continually, and to give thanks in all circumstances. It is what God wants of us and for us. In it we will find the fullness of what God has in store for us. Let us truly count our blessings this year: both the material and the spiritual. Despite the turmoil in the world around us, we all

have much to be thankful for.

AMEN.