

Thanksgiving Eve

P: O God, creator of us all, the little ones, the young and the aged: As we gather at our bountiful tables, may we be ever mindful of the many hands of preparation from field, to market, to kitchen, and to tables.

C: **With our celebration of a harvest of plenty you also send us challenges and opportunities to be caretakers and partners with brothers and sisters who go to bed hungry and homeless. God help us and guide us to learn and to understand from one another. May we know that we need each other for a life that is full. We pray all this in the name of Jesus. Amen**

Welcome and Announcements

Gathering Hymn: For the Beauty of the Earth

For the beauty of the earth
For the glory of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies.
Lord of all, to Thee we raise,
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth and friends above,
For all gentle thoughts and mild.
Lord of all, to Thee we raise,
This our hymn of grateful praise.

Prayer of the Day:

Almighty God our Father, your generous goodness comes to us new every day. By the work of your Spirit lead us to acknowledge your goodness, give thanks for your benefits, and serve you in willing obedience, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

P. The Lord be with you.

C. And also with you.

P. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

C. God's steadfast love endures forever.

P. Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his name.

C. Make known God's deeds among the peoples!

P. God blesses us with gifts of love:

C. With food and clothing, home and family.

P. God blesses us with daily work:
C. And all we need from day to day.

P. God protects us in time of danger:
C. And guards us from every evil.

P. God calls us into relationship with him:
C. And forms us into one holy people, the Church of Jesus Christ in this place.

P. Therefore shall we offer thanks and praise to the Lord our God.
C. O Lord our God, we will give thanks to you forever.

Psalm 126. (read responsively) *A Harvest of Joy*

L: When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.

C: Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."

L: The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

C: Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the watercourses in the Negeb.

L: May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

C: Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves.

Old Testament Reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all this was attested at the right time. ⁷ For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth,^[a] I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. Word of God, Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

Holy Gospel according to Matthew 6:25-33 **Glory to you O Lord**

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸ And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' ³² For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed

your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. The Gospel of our Lord, **Praise to you, O Christ**

Children's Message

Good Morning! The Gospel lesson today talks a lot about worry. In life we have things that we worry about. We worry about being liked by our friends, who will sit by us at lunch, if we'll be good on a sport's team, if something's wrong when we hear family members argue. What are some of the things you worry about? (Take volunteers). Some worries seem bigger than others. Some people worry about being sick or being safe. There is a lot of sin in this world and things that the devil tries to get at us with.

But Jesus tells us not to worry. He's taking care of us. He used examples in creation. God gives food to the birds. They don't have to plant it themselves and harvest it. God gives them their food. We don't need to worry about clothes. Look at how beautiful flowers are. Jesus tells us the King Solomon didn't even have clothes as beautiful as the flowers. If God cares for things like the birds and flowers, isn't he going to take care of you?

Worries can weigh us down and keep us from being the person God wants us to be. I have a backpack here that I'm going to put "worries" in. I need a volunteer to wear it. (Pick a volunteer). Here's the backpack. Now let's put in some worries. Tell me again some of your worries. (Take volunteers and add your own. Fill the backpack but not so much that it would hurt the child.) Wow these are a lot of worries that weigh (child) down. How do you feel with that weight of worry? (Heavy, hard to stand or move). Although worries aren't heavy books in a backpack, they still feel like they weigh us down. When we worry, we're not letting God take care of things. It's like we're saying, "I can take care of this Jesus. Thank you for offering but I got it." Jesus tells us we can always trust him. We know we can because he always keeps his promises. Now let's give those worries to Jesus.

Let's pray and give our worries to God. (Take books out of the backpack while praying).

Prayer: Jesus we give our worries to you. You promise to take care of us and we trust you. We have a lot to worry about but we know you can handle it. You died to take care of our sins. You took care of our big problem of sin and we know that you'll take care of our other problems too. Help us to give our worries over to you and not try and take them back. You can handle anything. We're so glad that we have a God that takes such good care of us. No one is like you. We have nothing to worry about when our life is in your hands. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Message

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

As I was researching commentaries on this Matthew passage I ran across a wonderful message written by a Pastor Pittendreigh that I thankfully used to help me form my message for you tonight.

The story is told of two men were walking through a field one day when they spotted an enraged bull. Instantly they darted toward the nearest fence. The storming bull followed in hot pursuit, and it was soon apparent they wouldn't make it.

Terrified, the one shouted to the other, "Put up a prayer, John. We need it as I think we're in for it!"

John answered, "I can't. I've never made a public prayer in my life."

"But your daddy was a preacher – surely he taught you some sort of prayer! So pray John, pray! The bull is catching up to us."

"All right," panted John, "I'll say the only prayer I know, the one my father used to repeat at the table: 'O Lord, for what we are about to receive, make us truly thankful.'" Pretty sure that's not the prayer he was hoping for.

We are here tonight to give thanks. And hopefully, not only to give thanks, but to feel thankful. Some of us may find it hard to feel thankful. We feel worried. We feel like the bulls are catching up with us. Some may feel anxious, concerned, lonely, distressed, or just plain bored. Holidays can be wonderful and hard both.

This past week I was thinking about things and people that I am grateful for. I'm really very lucky as my family continues to be close by and a big part of my life. I have two amazing careers with wonderful people at both of them. It's easy to come up with a long long list of things to be thankful for when things are good and all is well in your life. But then there are some who may not be feeling that way and may struggle to name even a handful of things.

I think of those who have lost loved ones this past year and will celebrate this first Thanksgiving without them. There are some who know of those who are fighting illness and struggle to remain alive and well. What about those that watch as their loved ones begin to forget those who love them and then there are some that have their health but don't have enough to meet other needs. How do those who struggle to put food on their table and gas in their tanks be thankful? What do you do when things are hard and you miss those that couldn't come home for the holiday or are loss and alone. It's hard when you think of Jesus saying "Don't worry about your life"

So what is your thanksgiving like? Is it joy and gratitude, or anxiety and worry? Sometimes it is hard to follow the instruction of Jesus and not worry about our lives. St. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, said something very similar when wrote, "Rejoice in

the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" Paul was always giving thanks to God. In another letter, he wrote, (1Thes 5:18) "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

In our epistle lesson for this evening, St. Paul urged us to constantly lift up all sorts of prayers – including prayers of thanksgiving for everyone (1 Tim 2:1). And before you say that it was easy for Jesus or for St. Paul or for others to give thanks because they were spiritual giants and had it simple, think again. St. Paul talked about how difficult his life was (in II Corinthians 11:23-28. It wasn't easy.

He said, "I have worked hard. I have been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches."

Yet this is the man who wrote, "Give thanks always!" He meant we should be thankful when things are going great, but he also meant we should be thankful when things are not going our way. It's hard to be thankful when someone in our family dies. When our health is threatened. When we lose our job or go through a divorce or face a failure in our life. And yet Paul wrote "give thanks in all circumstances." Paul knew hard times, and he knew he should give thanks to God, even in the most difficult of situations. It is difficult to be thankful in all situations.

A Scottish minister named Alexander Whyte was known for his uplifting prayers in the pulpit. He ALWAYS found something for which to be grateful. Well one Sunday morning the weather was so gloomy that one church member thought to himself, "Certainly the preacher won't think of anything for which to thank the Lord on a wretched day like this." Much to his surprise, however, Whyte began by praying, "We thank Thee, O God, that it is not always like this."

There is a story from Budapest, about a man who goes to the rabbi and complains, "Life is unbearable. There are nine of us living in one room. What can I do?" The rabbi answers, "Take your goat into the room with you." The man is incredulous, but the rabbi insists. "Do as I say and come back in a week." A week later the man comes back looking more distraught than before. "We cannot stand it," he tells the rabbi. "The goat is filthy." The rabbi then tells him, "Go home and let the goat out. And come back in a week." A radiant man returns to the rabbi a week later, exclaiming, "Life is beautiful. We enjoy every minute of it now that there's no goat--only the nine of us."

Being thankful in all situations is sometimes simply a matter of having a positive attitude. It is more than simply looking on the bright side. It is difficult to be thankful when the doctor tells you that you are ill, or when the teacher gives you a failing grade or the boss cuts your salary, or when a beloved friend or loved one dies.

One of our traditional hymns for Thanksgiving was written by a German Pastor, Martin Rinkart. It was long ago, in the 1600's, amid the darkness of the Thirty Years' War. Hundreds of people were dying. Martin Rinkart, is said to have buried five thousand of his parishioners in one year, and average of fifteen a day. His parish was ravaged by war, death, and economic disaster. In the heart of that darkness, with the cries of fear outside his window, he sat down and wrote this table grace for his children:

Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices;
Who wondrous things had done,
In whom His world rejoices.
Who, from our mother's arms
Hath led us on our way
With countless gifts of love
And still is ours today.

Thankfulness to God is not simply a self-centered appreciation for the things God does for us, for the things God gives to us. Thankfulness to God is a God-centered appreciation for the faithfulness of God in our lives.

A blessed Thanksgiving from my family to yours. I am blessed to have you in my life and pray that you too may find the blessings and thankfulness in your own lives this Thanksgiving.
Amen.

Hymn of the Day: Now Thank We All Our God

Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices
Who wondrous things has done
In whom his world rejoices
Who from our mothers' arms
Has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love
And still is our today

All praise and thanks to God
The Father now be give
The Son and Spirit blest
Who reign in highest heaven
The one eternal God

Whom heaven and earth adore
For thus it was, is now,
And shall be evermore.

Thanksgiving Prayer (P: Loving God C: we give you thanks)

Almighty God, from whom comes each good gift of life, we remember your loving kindness and your uncounted mercies as we join in grateful praise. For all your gifts to us and to our human race; for our life and the world in which we live. Loving God, **we give you thanks.**

For the order and constancy of nature; for the beauty and bounty of the world; for day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest; for the varied joys which every season brings, Loving God, **we give you thanks.**

For all the joys and comforts of life; for homes and families; for our friends; for the love, sympathy, and goodwill of persons near and far. Loving God, **we give you thanks.**

For the discipline of life; for the tasks and trials which train us to know ourselves and which bring us to accept one another just as you have created us. For the desire and power to help others; for every opportunity of serving our congregations and our generations in ways large or small. Loving God, **we give you thanks.**

For the gift of Jesus Christ, and everything which is ours as his disciples; for the presence and inspiration of your Holy Spirit throughout our days. For the tender ties which bind us to the unseen world; for the faith which dispels the shadows of earth and fills the closing years of life with the light of hope. Loving God, **we give you thanks.**

For the gift of your presence and healing. We pray for the friends of our congregation who are unable to join our worship in person and for all who are sick and suffering. Bring wholeness to all who struggles with illness, disease and long for healing in any way. Today we especially lift up Tom and Chris, Roger and Sonya, Kirk and Daniel, Terry and Marlis, Whitney and Jaime, Anne and Brent, Lynn and those we now name silently in our hearts.... Join our prayers with all those who pray in the body of Christ.

God of all grace and love, we have praise you, for all the richness and meaning that life holds for us. Now send us into the world to praise you with our lives, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. And thank you for the prayer that you gave to us as we pray it together on this Thanksgiving Eve.

Meal

P: Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

C: In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

Words of Institution

P: In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: *Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.*

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: *This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for remembrance of me.*

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension, we await his coming in glory.

C: Pour out your Holy Spirit, that by this Holy Communion we may know the unity we share with all your people in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

P: Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

C: all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our father who art in heaven hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen

Invitation to Communion

P: A feast of love is offered here for you and for all the saints.

After Communion Prayer:

Blessed Jesus, at this table, you have been for us both host and meal. Now send us forth to extend our tables and to share your gifts until that day when all feast together at your heavenly banquet. Amen.

Blessing: (sung)

The Lord bless you and keep you
Make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you
The Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace
Amen, amen, amen. Amen, amen, amen

Sending Bell

Sending Hymn: Praise and Thanksgiving

Praise and thanksgiving, Father we offer
For all things living you have made good
Harvest of sown fields, fruits of the orchard
Hay from the mown fields blossom and wood

Then will Your blessing reach every people
Each one confessing Your gracious hand
When You are reigning no one will hunger
Your love sustaining fruitful the land

Dismissal: Led on by the saints before us, go in peace to serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Mark Your Calendars:

Sunday, November 28th – First Sunday of Advent - 9am service at Kirkebo,
10am Sunday school and 11am service at Nora. Decorating of the churches
following services w/potlucks