

Sunday, October 7, 2018

Joel 2:21-27

I Timothy 2:1-7

Matthew 6:25-33

### Giving Thanks in Faith

Did you get a turkey? How big is your bird? The turkey farmers only wish we would eat turkey more often! But what about this holiday from the point of view of the turkey—it says—he's got a point, no one eats flamingo for Thanksgiving! SLIDE!

The year was 1578 when Sir. Martin Frobisher and his crew sat down and ate a meal of salt beef, biscuits and mushy peas to celebrate and give thanks to God for their safe arrival in Newfoundland. This was the first Thanksgiving by Europeans in North America but it was not until 1957 when the second Monday of October became the official day of Thanksgiving celebrations.

Thanksgiving is not considered a religious celebration now. Amazingly enough however there were two main reasons why Canada's Thanksgiving is distinctly different than that of the US. The first reason was that there was a crisis of faith in the late 1850's when Charles Darwin's "On the Origin of Species" was circulated and read as it questioned creation itself. It was then that Protestant clergy in Canada petitioned the colonial government to have an official day to thank God for the bountiful harvests. This official day would be focused time set aside to prove and honour God's existence.

The second reason was that the US was soon facing Civil War and to be separated from the blood shed of the neighbours to the south was a strong reason to proclaim a faithful day of thanksgiving in the churches across the country. After the celebrations of harvest were completed many newspapers printed the Thanksgiving sermons preached from pulpits in the newspapers. It was a solemn, holy day in the middle of the week when people would go to church and "thank God for their blessings and how fortunate they are to be Canadian."

This was also before Confederation and the Canadian people were still trying to figure out what it even meant to be Canadian. "Canada was about to become a separate country from Great Britain," so making the holiday into a "Protestant nationalist

celebration” was the ministers’ way of creating something to help Canada craft a national identity. But the “Protestant” part of the national celebration soon started to lose its dominance. People were looking for a way to turn the time after church into more of a party. Canadian families got the idea for hosting harvest feasts.

Canadian Thanksgiving first moved to a Monday in 1908, after railways lobbied to turn it into a long weekend that could be used to visit family of course by train and that day change became permanent in 1957.

But there are many Protestants who still lift up this somewhat secular day as a day of giving thanks in faith because we need to take the time and look and experience God’s abundance for us once again.

This is the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in the season of Creation and as we recall the messages of this time, our focus has been on Matthew 6:25-33. This is Jesus’ teaching on how we need not worry or be afraid about our lives as God will provide. These ideas of not worrying or being fearful are repeated because we are humans and we worry and we are afraid of things situations and other matters often which we cannot do anything about. We worry about many situations—we worry about people travelling to places where tornadoes are common, we worry when sump pumps stop in the midst of rainstorms, when temperatures rise along with humidity levels causing breathing difficulties and we worry whether there will be food to eat.

We are also people who are afraid- some are afraid to drive on expressways, to walk downtown, to walk in a mall, to use the internet for research, or even to say hello to the person sitting near you. People are fearful because others have been hurt or they have experienced serious losses. But why are we afraid?

In our world today- we can find out about storms hours and days ahead of time and can prevent damages to our buildings. We can leave one region and go to another to help very quickly and we can communicate effectively if we listen and pay attention. And do not need to be afraid- what is the worst that can happen? We might become sick or hurt or die? But if we have faith we do not need to be afraid if we get sick or hurt or die—for we know the creator. God will call his faithful people home safely to heaven.

Don’t worry- Jesus says don’t worry about your life You are much more valuable than the birds of the air. You cannot add any time to your life if you worry! Why are you

worrying? About clothes, food and drink? Yes you need them to live but don't focus your life on these. Each day has its own special moments. Just think about today—not tomorrow. For example, those of you who are going to enjoy a Thanksgiving meal today are not worried about what to do with the leftovers or when you'll be making turkey soup are you? No—you are going to enjoy the day of feasting. Don't worry about tomorrow be content with today.

Be not afraid. The prophet Joel uses the devastation of locusts which cause a famine for the people to imagine the coming day of God. He is telling the people of Israel not to have fear but to be glad and rejoice because the days were coming when the dried up land that they had been used to would become green again. The trees that were barren would again bear fruit and the fig tree and vine would soon yield their riches. The people hearing Joel's message of hope were also told to be glad, to rejoice in the Lord because he has given autumn rains and abundant showers both for the spring and autumn in order that the crops of grains and vats of oil will be abundant and overflowing. Joel just asked the people to praise the name of God and those that do turn to God will receive His Spirit and be blessed as they are forgiven. They will also know God is watching them in Israel and that there is no other God for He is their God. God made the promise that never again would his people be shamed. Do this for everyone and you all will be well.

As we gather around tables of abundance with family and friends what do we do other than 'dig in'? Is there a moment for prayers, for intercession and thanksgiving for and by everyone? We have heard that this thanksgiving time was set aside to give thanks to God but do we do so in faith? Do we give thanks, with grateful hearts? Do we give thanks to God as Creator who made all things possible? Do we offer our prayers for others so that we might live peaceful and quiet lives? This is what we are called to do as faithful people- give thanks and praise and come to a knowledge of the truth. This truth is stated in Paul's letter to Timothy: There is one God and one mediator between God and man-Jesus Christ. Jesus was appointed a herald and an apostle and he taught the true faith to the Gentiles. So let us pray. That is let us praise and give God the glory He so deserves. We do this because you have done and continue to do what Jesus said. Seek first His kingdom and his righteousness then all things will be given to you.

God has blessed you because you have called upon Him and you can rejoice and offer praise of thanksgiving today and every day.

You can give thanks in faith because you believe that Christ Jesus is the Son of God, the creator of all and that the Spirit of God is with us now. You may give thanks because will use you to tell the message of hope to others if you pray and ask. Let us rejoice as we give thanks to God. As we pray that God will use us so that others may give thanks in faith. Amen.