

Day of Thanksgiving
Monday, October 14, 2024

Introduction to the day

Today's readings reflect two of the strains that go into the celebration of a national day of thanksgiving: gratitude for abundant harvest (Joel) and civic prayer for a peaceable common life (1 Timothy). The core meaning of Thanksgiving for many of us—a home feast for extended family and friends—is not reflected in the readings; but it is reflected weekly in the church's meal of thanksgiving (eucharist). What we wish for both these thanksgiving meals is that they will go deeper than celebration of one another and our own blessings, to recognize in our true Host one who wants everyone brought to the table.

PRAYER OF THE DAY (ELW p. 102)

Let us pray.

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.

FIRST READING: Joel 2:21-27

A reading from Joel.

The prophet Joel understood that a locust plague that ravaged the land of Judah was God's judgment on the people, whom he then called to repentance. Today's reading points beyond the judgment to a time when God will bless the land and cause it to produce food in abundance.

PSALM: Psalm 126

The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad indeed. (Ps. 126:3)

GOSPEL: Matthew 6:25-33

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught his disciples about the providence of God so that they would regard life with thanksgiving and trust rather than anxiety.

GOSPEL MESSAGE - DAY OF THANKSGIVING

Abundance in Hard Times

In the Northern Hemisphere, autumn often finds us taking stock of what we need to get through the coming winter. Is the snowblower in good working order and the shovels at the ready? Are the heavier blankets on the beds? Is there enough fuel to keep the house warm for months on end? As the seasons turn, our bodies remember these anniversaries and we often find ourselves eager to hibernate with many of our animal kin. These cycles of life have been at work for thousands of years, yet in the vulnerable months to come we will again learn to rely on the abundance of God that sustains us when we need it most.

God's ongoing provision for the world is a marvelous and mysterious thing. Jesus reminds us that God is generous and loving and will care for us more than we know. We are deeply valued! The natural systems that sustain the wildlife in our world will also sustain us: we are part of God's good creation, and there is an abundance of resources to be shared.

Christ's table is one of the places where such abundance meets us as often as God gathers us. Bread and wine are shared, while grace and love and forgiveness are given in generous proportion. "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God," the presiding minister often prompts us. "It is right to give our thanks and praise," we respond. Again we are fed; again we are cared for. There is no scarcity here.

How might we celebrate such generosity in our lives beyond our worship spaces today? It's easy to give abundantly to people we know and trust, yet we find it challenging to follow God's generosity beyond the comfort of familiar relationships. May we be moved to share God's goodness across the boundaries society erects, because God's abundance knows no bounds. For that we give great thanks!

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Rooted in God's abundant love for the world, let us pray for our neighbors, the church, and all of creation.

We praise you, O Lord, for you alone are God. Give to your church a holy curiosity to ask questions and build bridges across difference. Sustain ecumenical and interreligious partnerships. On this day of Thanksgiving, commit us to respectful and faithful dialogue with Indigenous neighbors who find this day difficult. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We praise you for green pastures and abundant harvests. Feed us with the fruit of the earth, the work of human hands. Bless those who labor in fields and factories for the food that nourishes and strengthens us. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We praise you for leaders who seek justice and equity for all. For all elected officials, we pray. Guide them to prioritize the common good over narrow individualism. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We praise you for your tender care. Be present with those who weep this day. Lead them through their sorrow and tears into shouts of joy. We especially pray for Linda Boland, Ken Fulford, Sandra Gagnon, Shirley Glickman, Walter Hobden, Donna L. Hoffman, Bill Lorbetskie, Glenda Panke, Marilyn Schneider, Danny Schultz, Doug Sell, Debbie Thom, Keith Weckwerth, Denita Wolfgram, Elaine Yourth, Harold Yourth, Stephanie Yourth, and those in long term care facilities and senior residences. We name out loud or in the quiet of our hearts those who need your healing touch. (pause). Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We praise you for our community of faith. You have brought us this far by faith. In times of worry and uncertainty, renew our trust in your abundance. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We praise you for your saints who now feast at your eternal banquet. Today, we remember our sister Myrtle Gust. Sustain us by their faithful lives of gratitude until that day when we join them at your table. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We offer our prayers to you, gracious God, trusting in your boundless love for all that you have made, through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

BLESSING (ELW p. 114)

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

Amen.

DISMISSAL (ELW p. 115)

Go in peace. Share the good news.

Thanks be to God.

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