

Sermon October 11th, 2020

Jesus is Doing Good Things in Our Lives! Really!

Today and tomorrow many of us across the country will be gathering, in smaller cohort groups due to the pandemic, to sit around a table of delicious food. Giving thanks for the people who have touched our lives, and for the good things we have experienced this past year.

Now, 2020 has been a year many of us will want to forget when the calendar turns to 2021. We have experienced many hardships as our lives have been turned upside down from this pandemic. From the impact this pandemic has had on our mental health **(Image)**. To the impact it has had on our financial well-being. From the impact this pandemic has had on our relationships. To the impact it has had on our physical health **(Image)**. And as many of our communities' head into a second wave we can already see the fears and anxieties resurfacing in many people's hearts and minds.

This thanksgiving we are challenged to take out our microscopes **(Image)** and more intently look at the good things God is doing in our lives during this time. Trying to find this love in the little details of the microscopic images of our lives. Since we are having a lot of trouble seeing this love with our naked eyes.

Or if you are more into star gazing, we are challenged to take out our telescopes **(Image)** and see past all the hurts and pains that we are experiencing in this atmosphere. Focusing in on God's redeeming love working in our lives. Finding this love in the stars and planets beyond the storm clouds we are experiencing.

Thanksgiving has always been an opportunity for us to take a break from the challenges we face in our lives, whether it is the suffering we are going through now, or the busyness of our lives that distract us from seeing what God is doing. Or our tendency to take for granted the good things that happen to us. Forgetting the one who provides these good things for us. And instead, focusing on God's generosity and graciousness. Giving thanks for all God has done in our lives to love us. To heal and redeem us.

When God's people are about to enter the Promised Land, God challenges them not to forget what God has done for them. "Remember the manna I gave you in the desert when you were at your lowest. I provided for your

well-being. I took care of you. And I will continue to do so as you enter the Promised Land.”

When we suffer, we can be blinded from the good things God is doing in our lives to redeem us. It sometimes takes a miracle/something concrete like sending manna from heaven for us to see that God is present, and looking after us.

Likewise, when we are doing well, we can take for granted all the good things God is doing in our lives, and forget where these good things come from. We forget that all we have; God gives us purely as a gift. That God is gracious and loving, and wants us to do well. Wants us to be the people God created us to be. So, God gives us the opportunities, the talents, the possessions, the emotions, the supports to do well. Everything we need to be the people God created us to be.

In our gospel, Jesus encounters a leper colony where ten people who have leprosy come to Jesus for help. Nine are from his faith tradition, and one is a Samaritan. Jesus chooses to show them compassion and heals them all. Then he sends them to the priest, as was custom in those days, to be welcomed back into the community. In response to Jesus’ compassion only the Samaritan comes back to Jesus to give him thanks.

Now, it is easy to read this gospel and get on the nine faithful people who didn’t give thanks for what Jesus had done. Maybe they were all busy reconnecting with loved ones. Maybe they were having a party to celebrate their re-entry into the community. Or maybe, as faithful people, they just expected to be healed. This is part of God’s promise to us. Whatever the reason is for their not giving thanks to Jesus, we often find ourselves in the shoes of the nine. Taking for granted God’s love for us. Just expecting all these good things to happen to us. Only knocking on God’s door when things are not going so well.

Kind of like how we take for granted the people in our lives who tolerate our inadequacies. Who put up with our complaining, our messiness, our stubbornness, our telling them what to do, our rebellious nature, our bad habits. We don’t always show appreciation for our loved ones. We don’t always show appreciation for God.

What Paul notices in the early church is that when we understand God's gracious love for us, and that everything we have is a gift from the one who created us. We are moved to give thanks to God for everything we receive, and act more generously towards others. Or in other words, we become a cheerful giver.

When we understand this grace and generosity God offers us, we are more able to see the good God is doing in our lives. We are more able to see the healing and redemption God is doing for us. We are able to see that God provides for our well-being, and is always present. Even during this pandemic.

Thanksgiving gives us an opportunity to look past all those things that distract us from seeing God's goodness touching our lives. To give thanks, and to be moved by God's generosity to be generous to others **(Image)**.

And so, as we gather today and tomorrow may we not forget all that God has done in our lives so that we are still able to share in a meal together. That God is continually sending Manna from heaven so we can be fed spiritually, emotionally, and physically during this pandemic time. Even if it is with a smaller group of our family and friends. With a smaller Turkey **(image)**

May we see God's redeeming love acting in our lives during this pandemic, whether it is opening our hearts to appreciate our loved ones more. Dedicating more time to be with those we love. Or becoming more aware of all the people in need in our community. Or finding new ways to build community **(Image)**. Breathing new life into our individualistic world. Or seeing that even with everything that has happened God is still providing for us through God's gracious love, and through the generosity of one another.

Let us pray, gracious God, we give thanks to you for all that you have done in our lives this past year. Healing us, redeeming us, loving us. When the suffering seems overwhelming for us, open our ears to listen for your generous and gracious voice. Open our eyes to see your goodness impacting our world. Open our hearts to live out this grace and generosity. **Amen.**