

Ralph Waldo Emerson penned a little verse reminding us of all for which we should be grateful. His words:

For each new morning with its light,
For rest and shelter of the night,
For health and food,
For love and friends,
For everything Thy goodness sends.

As most of you know, I have always made it a point to spend Thanksgiving with my family. As far back as I can remember, I have never missed this holiday. The cast of characters around the table has changed, but the happiness we share has not been altered. There have been times when I have done memorial services for members of my family when I am at home at this time of year. This year my 99 year old aunt is close to death and I am not sure what might happen during this return home. I am grateful for the way she has hung in there so that I will have a chance to say good-bye. I am grateful for the life of this woman, one who was a non-judgmental soul.

Things change as the years go by in the loss of family members and even in the food we put on the Thanksgiving table. Once again, a Tofurky, for the vegetarians amongst us, will be on the table next to the real turkey.

As in years past, I fly to Wisconsin this afternoon to celebrate the holiday. This task has been made more difficult with the collapse of some airlines changing the time I will spend in traveling from 2 hours to about 5. But it is well worth it to get to see my little granddaughter who is now 2 ½ years old. She will help me cook at her house for her aunts and uncles.

Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday because there is no agenda for the day other than to enjoy the company of those near and dear to me, and to watch the Green Bay Packers play. It is a time to gather together, do a little reflecting, catch up on what has been going on and count our many blessings. There is always a special prayer at dinner thanking God for all the goodness that has been given us, even in difficult times.

Our Psalm for this morning reminds us that we need to be sure to thank God for all the good things and people that have come to us in life. This Psalm is classified as a Psalm of thanksgiving. In reading it we are reminded that we are we and God is God. It reminds us who we are and whose we are.

Too often we like to think of ourselves as “self-made people” who need no one to lean on. We are rugged individualists and consider it a weakness if we cannot work our own way through life. This attitude often cuts us off from people who could and would have much value for us and who would support us if we would only let them. Thanksgiving should help us remember that we are all intertwined on this planet, we all need one another, and, until we learn that important lesson, there will be no true and lasting peace on earth and within our selves. Thanksgiving Thoughts 11-20-11 Psalm 100

The Psalmist in the song of thanks for this morning reminds us that we are in God's care, we are tended to as sheep in God's pasture. This does not point to just a few of us as being the children of God, but to all people who dwell on earth. While we have times of difficulty and misunderstanding, we are all loved and cherished by our Maker. For this we should truly be grateful.

This is something our Pilgrim forefathers and mothers understood when they celebrated their first Thanksgiving dinner with the Native Americans who had helped them survive their first year in this strange, new world. They believed it was by God's grace that all of them had not died and that there was hope for their future. So, they gathered together for three days of feasting, thanksgiving and praise for the God who had brought them to the place they were. They found new determination and strength to go on.

Because of them we are here in this free land of ours. From them has come our tradition of Continuing Congregational Churches.

In spite of the trials and tribulations we, as a nation, have endured in the past and that we are enduring in the present, for most of us, there is no better place to be than in our country. We are as resilient as those early settlers and we will get through our present difficulties. It will take time and patience and creativity and the work of many thoughtful people, but we will come through. We must hold to the hope generations have had before us.

So, as we “gather together to ask the Lord's blessing” this coming Thursday, we should reflect on all it is God brought us through in the past; think of where we are in the present and trust that we have a future through the grace of God and our ability to know, understand and live God's will.

As I have in the past, I would like to close this meditation with an Iroquois Prayer:

We return thanks to our mother, the earth, which sustains us. We return thanks to the rivers and streams, which supply us with water. We return thanks to all herbs, which furnish medicines for the cure of our diseases. We return thanks to the corn, and to her sisters, the beans and squash, which give us life. We return thanks to the bushes and trees, which provide us with fruit. We return thanks to the wind, which, moving the air, has banished diseases. We return thanks to the moon and the stars, which have given us their light when the sun was gone. We return thanks to our grandfather He-no, ..., who has given to us his rain. We return thanks to the sun, that he has looked upon the earth with a beneficent eye. Lastly, we return thanks to the Great Spirit, in whom is embodied all goodness, and who directs all things for the good of his children

Amen