

Meditation:

On this Sunday before Thanksgiving, we come to our “part 3” in a series about gratitude, the practice of giving thanks, of finding God/good in every circumstance, a practice of gratefulness as a way to nourish our own souls, *and the soul of our communal life*. I invite you to bring to your heart-mind those small moments that lead you to give thanks.

Oh my Beloved, Oh my Beloved, Oh my Beloved, I rest my eyes in you.*

**heart, mind, soul, breath, love (from the song by Mark Shepard)*

Taking a deeper breath or two, come back gently to the room, gratefully bringing with you the gifts found in shared quiet and stillness.

Message:

Inspired by reading Diana Butler Bass’ ***Grateful: The Subversive Practice of Giving Thanks***, here are the questions I asked us last week:

Where in your life do you **feel** a sense of joy and delight that is your “me” response? Where or how do you **show** your thanks or gratefulness? Does gathering in **being** the “we” of community to sing our prayers, to share the communion of Presence, make you well up in appreciation? How and where do you take part in **doing** good in our shared civic, communal life?

To those questions, here is one for today:

*“How does gratitude move from feelings to a disposition of character, from an emotion to an ethic? (DBB) How do we go from giving thanks to LIVING thanks? The title of my talk, ThanksLiving, comes from a section of **Even Mystics Have Bills to Pay** where Jim Rosemergy writes, “...thanksgiving is a grand expression of life- ‘thanksliving.’ ...Thanksgiving and praise are natural expressions of the soul. We do not give thanks because we have received... or because we expect to receive... but because we are expressing our true nature.”*

Diana Butler Bass:

“Gratitude is more than just an emotion. It is also a disposition that can be chosen and cultivated, an outlook toward life that manifests itself in actions— it is an *ethic*... a framework of principles by which we live more fully in the world. [It] involves developing habits and practices of gratefulness that change us for the better. Gratitude involves not only what we feel, but also what we do.

In this way, gratitude resembles love. Love is also a complex set of feelings— desire, passion, devotion, and affection. We feel love, but love is also a commitment, a choice, and a vow, an emotional orientation toward a person or persons that causes us to act in certain ways. [We know] love as a noun can be tricky... Love moves from being a noun— an emotion we feel— to a verb— an ethic of commitment we embrace.

Gratitude is like that. Some amount of the time we feel grateful, but when the emotions seem to desert us... we can choose to give thanks and act in accordance with grace. Gratitude is both a noun and a verb. Gratitude is both a feeling and a choice. The first often arises unannounced and the second takes a lifetime of practice.”

- Gratitude is a complex set of emotions— sometimes joyfully bubbling up, and sometimes fleeting and hard to find.
- And gratitude is an expression of our true, innermost nature, a reflection of the first and greatest gift, that of life itself.
- We aren’t “required” to be grateful for events that cause hardship, for loss of dreams and loved ones, for our dark nights of the soul— but what if we can train the eyes of our heart to notice those small moments that I talked about a couple of weeks ago, moments that can be found even in our darkest times?: a friend who listens deeply, who laughs and cries with us;

the changing light of a cold November morning; the unwavering love of a four legged friend; the unexpected openings that grew out of what felt like failure; the soul-cleansing of tears shed in grief.

- On this Sunday before Thanksgiving can we commit to *Thanksliving*? This holiday becomes greater than the myth of its beginnings only when we truly practice *being and doing* gratefulness.
- This holiday asks us to see clear-eyed the complex legacy of our country's origins, history, and current moment– and then asks us to join the resistance by remembering that gratitude, like that other complex set of emotions, LOVE, also then spurs us to action. Can we help create a world where no one is hungry? Where all children are safe? Where we care for each other, and this one beautiful planet?
- FOCUS Festival of Thanks and Giving. It's an afternoon where our neighbors from the Breakfast Club and Food Pantry are guests, joining folks from the neighborhood, volunteers and congregants from the FOCUS churches– to share simple food, simple crafts and games– and time being together. Last year's gratitude circle was a moving, humbling reminder that in my life of relative privilege it's easy for me to lose sight of ThanksLiving. Yet even in the hardest of life circumstances, our friends ALL had something to share about what makes them grateful
- So *our* call then is to TRUST our Source. When we are grateful, we LIVE from a sense of enoughness- that WE are enough, that we have enough, that there is enough to share. Thanksliving invites us to be resilient, to resist violence, to work hand in hand with grace to disrupt the power structures that cause such suffering. We are called to transform our hearts, our lives and to deepen our sense of connection to the sacredness of earth, and all beings...

From ***Opening to You: Zen Inspired Translations of the Psalms***

by Norman Fisher

Psalm 100

All the earth shouts for you!

We serve you joyfully

Come into your presence

With thanksgiving songs

We know you intimate as all

Know we come from you

Are you

Your people, flock of your pasture, wholly yours

As we enter your gate with thanksgiving songs

Enter your court with chants of praise

We offer all our thanks

And heap blessings on your unsayableness

For you are goodness

Endless kindness

Truthfulness now

And throughout the generations

May it be so.

And so it is. Amen.