

Oct 9, 2011

THANKSGIVING SUNDAY

SCRIPTURE: Hebrew Bible: Deuteronomy 8: 7-18
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 9: 6-15
Gospel: Luke 17: 11-19

MEDITATION: WITH A CHEERFUL HEART?

That was a beautiful story that Ruth and the kids shared with us. It touches us in the “heart” doesn’t it? Somehow when we hear stories like that we feel “good” and we imagine that we are one of the “good” folks that we hear about. We WANT to be one of those good folks for sure and yet sometimes when we are in one of those moments when we are called to be that GOOD person, somehow it is not just as easy as we imagined it to be.

I had an experience like that this week. I was busy, with lots of planning and a funeral to prepare for. I wasn’t feeling all that “good” at the moment when Raycine buzzed into my office that there was someone on the phone who wished to speak to me. I took the call and it was someone who I had talked to several times over the years. This person was asking me if there wasn’t some way we could help her with a ham for Thanksgiving because she didn’t have anything. For a moment I was silent, thinking about the many people that I have been turning away this fall because our benevolent fund is overdrawn. It is never easy to turn people away when you feel that they really need your help, but that has been our reality. I often say I am sorry but we can’t give what we don’t have.

Now here is this voice that I recognize, a voice that we have helped in the past. In fact one Christmas eve, she called at the last minute and we rushed around to take a turkey out of the freezer for her, and get to the store to buy the extras that would make up a festive dinner. I had told her to come after the midnight service and we would give her this hamper. Only thing she never showed up and someone from our congregation took the thawing turkey home to cook so it wouldn’t be wasted. The following week this person phoned wanting to pick up the hamper after all! I remember I wasn’t all that “kind” while I explained that we had worked hard to meet her need and she hadn’t come and now I was sorry but the turkey was no longer available.

And now here she was again. In my moment of silence and thinking, I was struggling. I knew I had a turkey in the freezer that I wouldn’t need because in the end my family was dispersed all over Saskatchewan and Alberta this weekend. I struggled! Maybe amazingly God won that struggle and my challenging friend came over to the church almost immediately to pick up the turkey, No trimmings added this time!

All week I had been reading the scripture over and over - that one from 2 Corinthians about the cheerful giver. I knew I wasn’t being particularly cheerful and over the rest of

the week I struggled with that! I am going to assume that you have had moments like this too. Moments when we can rationalize our less than cheerfulness when we do the right thing. Those moments when we know we should be thankful and express that thanks but somehow we just let the moment slip away.

Jesus reminds us it is important to say thanks and Paul reminds us it is important to learn what it means to be generous. "Each person should give what they have decided in their heart to give not reluctantly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver". When we do this we become aware of abundance instead of focusing on scarcity. When we give in this way all God's people can have what they need.

The leadership of this church has been overwhelmed with thankfulness for the generosity of our congregation as we try to keep going with the bridge financing that we asked the congregation to supply. We have been doing all right, and we are aware that there are those amongst us who are giving beyond what they can really afford. From what I can discern it is indeed with a cheerful heart and that makes it even more important for all of us to remember to say thank you to each other. We believe that the world needs us here, not only to give what they think they need but also to give what is in our hearts and in our mission to share the abundance and love of God with them. We know it is too easy to look at our society and buy into what seems to be said, "We don't need you – we don't need the church" BUT if we are faithful in our following of Christ we cannot believe that. The world needs God, the world needs the church to be present and we need each other, to share our strength and our love and our commitment.

Thank you for your faithfulness and for your determination. Let us together continue to be what God would have us be.

AMEN