

Denice Leslie
November 25, 2007
Reign of Christ and Thanksgiving Sunday
Ecclesiastes 3: 1 – 8, 10-14
II Corinthians 9:8
John 2: 10 – 11

“Celebrating with Thanksgiving”

Roast turkey with stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, sweet potatoes, green beans with bacon, cranberry sauce, rolls with butter, sparkling cider and three kinds of pie with whipped cream! A feast fit for a king.

And four days later we're still eating it! Overflowing abundance.... Or glut?

The question of King Jesus for us is:
Will our grace lines expand as much as our waist lines?

Can we celebrate this day with the kind of thanksgiving that is the result of having feasted on the grace and abundance of God in our lives?

Will our giving be as bountiful as what we have received?

Will we give thanks for how the needs of others present us with opportunities for joyful, eager service?

In gratitude for all we have received, will we offer up our best efforts, energies, thoughts and offerings for the life-giving gospel of Christ?

Barbara Grams come up here. I want you to tell us about you and Roger and the family with 9 kids. (*Barbara and Roger Grams accepted a request to provide for a family with nine children for Thanksgiving—the food pantry in the area had to turn their request this year away for lack of food.—The Grams not only provided them with Thanksgiving Dinner fixings but also with staples, and breakfast sausages and small gifts. The kids, ages 4 – 18 were all dancing and saying “Yes!” as the gifts were revealed. They were happy and grateful and so were the Grams.*)

Isn't that a great story? And you know what is so great about it? Barbara's giggles! Her joy! The joy she and Roger received from doing

for others. Everyone had joy and laughter—the receivers and the givers! Satisfaction was had by all.

Laughter and giving are the best medicine for what ails us. The bible tells us in Ecclesiastes 3: “...*there is nothing better for (people) than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil.*”

This is certainly why we celebrate Thanksgiving—that we might pause to give our thanks, and rise up to celebrate: eat and drink and take pleasure in all of our toil.

The Pilgrims struggled and struggled to get a foot hold in this land new to them. The native Americans helped them to survive and together they gave thanks and celebrated in all their toil.

It would have been so easy for them to throw in the towel, give up and go back to England—they suffered so much and yet they stayed on and were able to pause and rejoice in the blessings they had received in spite of the terribly devastating losses they endured.

Pause for a minute and think about some of the things you are thankful even in the midst of the dark hours. Raise your hand if you would be willing to share what you're thankful for.

I'm going to take the hand held mic out here and give you a chance to share.

After each person has shared, let's say, “Thank you, Lord.”

Our stewardship theme has been “Dessert First” with the idea that we will give the best to God first and permit ourselves to receive the goodness God has to offer us first.

Like Lucille, the lady who made it a point to eat dessert first at church potlucks and to give to God first—we as Christians are asked to get our priorities straight so our lives may reflect the amazing goodness of God regardless of the circumstances that befall us for good or for ill. As with the Apostle Paul we rejoice always—in all circumstances because of the love of God poured out for us in Jesus and in that process of living rejoice filled lives we are, Paul tells us in

Philippians, like shining stars in the night for all the world to see. We can shine in the darkness because....

“We worship a God who loves parties! Every Sunday in church is a celebration of God’s love. Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter are especially great times of celebration. We celebrate God’s love in weddings, baptisms, and today in a confirmation.

Funeral services or memorial services, properly understood, are times not only to share grief and heartache but also to share in celebrating the life of the deceased and the reality of eternal life.

And we worship a God who loves to give us good things. We need to be responsible about the use of the blessings we have received, but we should not feel guilty about what we have either. God intends for us to enjoy life, and God places us in a world filled with blessings.”¹

As good stewards seeking to do God’s will, let us remember to:

- Give thanks to God for our material blessings
- Work to resist the forces of a consumer culture that would have us confuse needs with wants.
- Resist societal pressure to evaluate ourselves and others on the basis of income or possessions.
- Be alert to the possibility that God wants us to make a difference in the life of persons less well-off financially.
- Work through the opportunities the church presents us to make a positive difference in the lives of others through our service and through our offerings.
- Work as citizens of our nation to change policies that will bridge the gap between the hungry, the working poor and ourselves.

- Be mindful of the link between our consumption of resources and the needs of the world.
- And finally, let us remember to eat dessert first and give to God first!²

Let the people say, Amen.

¹ Cell Phones, Dessert, and Faith, by Steve Clapp, pp. 125-126 and paraphrased by me.

² Ibid.