

2024 10 13 – *Living & Giving with Gratitude*

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 (*The Inclusive Bible*)

A blind boy sat on the steps of a building with a hat by his feet. He held up a sign which read, "I am blind, please help."

There were only a few coins in the hat – spare change from folks as they hurried past.

A man was walking by. He took a few coins from his pocket and dropped them into the hat. He then took the sign, turned it around, and wrote some words. Then he put the sign back in the boy's hand so that everyone who walked by would see the new words.

Soon the hat began to fill up. A lot more people were giving money to the blind boy.

That afternoon, the man who had changed the sign returned to see how things were. The boy recognized his footsteps and asked, "Were you the one who changed my sign this morning? What did you write?"

The man said, "I only wrote the truth. I said what you said but in a different way."

I wrote, "Today is a beautiful day, but I cannot see it."

<https://www.thetappingsolution.com/blog/short-lesson-gratitude/>

Both signs spoke the truth, that the boy was blind. So why do you think the second sign was more effective? (wait for answers) It changed the perspective, the attitude of each person who walked by. It reminded them of two things: 1) that it was a beautiful day and 2) that they were able to see it, to experience it. It reminded them of two reasons to be grateful. As a result of that statement, they felt a sense of gratitude.

Our days are filled with reasons to worry, to be discouraged, to complain. Right now, the weather is getting colder and some of us are starting to feel that cold in our muscles and joints. The increasing darkness is making it harder to get up in the morning. There are multiple elections in the works and some of us are already getting tired of the rhetoric, of wondering who we can believe and who we can't. Recently the news has been filled with hurricanes and other natural disasters and we are worried about our world and what will be left for our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. There's lots of reasons to worry, to be discouraged, to complain.

This was also true in the church in Corinth. If we were to read the rest of Paul's second letter, we would find that all is not well in that congregation. Near the end of the letter, Paul writes about his fear of their quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit and disorder. We are not aware of any natural disasters or provincial elections happening in Corinth, but there is definitely friction amongst the people of this fledgling church. Obviously they have reasons to be concerned too.

But in his letter Paul also reminds this community of faith that they have reasons to give thanks. Last week, after reading the same scripture passage, we talked about the abundance that God had provided in their lives. The fact that the people of Corinth had enough to eat and drink, they had homes to live in and a community of faith for support. Their lives were filled with abundance. And Paul also writes about the "indescribable gift" that they have received. This is, of course, the gift of God's love, God's mercy, God's grace. He writes about the

“exceeding grace of God” that exists within the members of that congregation in Corinth. He reminds them that they are all beloved members of the family of God.

That is really what life is about ... isn't it? We are given this incredible gift that is life itself and with it the gift of love. Love comes in many forms. We experience love through family, through friends, through community, and in particular through this congregation. We experience love through hugs, texts, phone calls, cards and visits. We experience love through the raking of leaves, giving of rides, preparing of meals, sharing of cups of coffee and cookies. We experience love through the grace of God that exists in the people around us.

We experience love through creation itself. This time of year we are able to revel in the colours of fall, in the wonders of the harvest, and in the beauty of the rising sun glistening on a frost-covered field. Just this week, many of us marvelled at the dancing colours of the Northern Lights as they lit up our prairie sky. Over and over we are reminded of God's indescribable gift, God's gift of life and love. Like the people walking by that blind boy sitting on the steps, we all need to be reminded of the beauty this is around us, of the gift of life itself.

When we take the time to notice all that we have been given, then we can't help but feel gratitude. Tomorrow we all have an extra day off, a holiday that has been set aside in our country for the express purpose of giving thanks. It is wonderful to have this special day and, for many us, to have this opportunity to

eat and celebrate with family and friends. But gratitude is not a once a year feeling. Gratitude is a way of living.

Scientific studies have shown that gratitude improves our relationships, our physical & mental health, our sleep and even our self-esteem. And recognizing all that we have to be thankful for—even during the worst times—fosters resilience, the ability to survive and thrive.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/what-mentally-strong-people-dont-do/201504/7-scientifically-proven-benefits-of-gratitude>

Gratitude is powerful and there are a few key ways that we can foster an attitude of gratitude in our lives. The first is to record our blessings in a notebook or journal, the second is to write letters of thanks to the people in our lives and a third is to connect with a friend on a regular basis and devote at least part of the conversation to sharing what we are thankful for these days. And finally prayers of thanksgiving are basically a spoken gratitude journal. So daily prayers of thanks, even saying grace at the table, can also help live with gratitude.

When we live with gratitude then giving becomes a natural part of our life as well. In today's scripture reading, the apostle Paul is reminding the church in Corinth that they made a promise to raise a certain amount of money to support the poor in the city of Jerusalem. Paul is sending this letter, along with some of his coworkers, as a reminder that he will soon be coming to pick up their gift. He is hoping the members will give generously and will give with gratitude. He writes, "the administration of this service not only supplies the need of the holy ones, but also overflows in thanksgivings to God."

I guess things haven't changed much over the past two centuries. We are still writing letters as reminders of the need to give thanks and to give with gratitude. This week, the members of this congregation received our yearly Thanksgiving Letter. In that letter we were reminded of our opportunity to give to the ministry of this community of faith.

Like the members of the church in Corinth, like the people who walked by the blind boy sitting on the steps, I invite each one of us to consider all the blessings in our lives and to give out of gratitude, to give from a sense of abundance and to give with commitment and intention. May it be so. Amen.