

## Reverend David's Sermon for Thanksgiving 2024

The biggest miracle associated with Thanksgiving is that the turkey will last until Christmas and the turkey cooked at Christmas will last until next Thanksgiving.

Soon you'll probably have turkey sandwiches turkey soup, turkey breakfast cereals and turkey popsicles. In fact, turkey is such a big part of it that some are not calling it Thanksgiving but Turkey Day.

But let's resist that and take a moment today we'll be traditionalists and still think about "Thanksgiving" which is upon us now.

The very word *Thanksgiving* to me is one of the words that can either be taken as a thing – that is a noun – a holiday – or it could also be *an action* – a verb – the act of giving thanks.

It's a word that implies a relationship with another. Harvest thanksgiving is a time to bring to mind our relationship with God who has provided for us through the gifts of the earth and the soil and the sun and rain the good gifts that sustain us and nourish us and give us life.

How easy it is to forget that. It is especially easy when we go to the supermarket and it's all there - vegetables on the shelves and tables, milk in jugs, bread in plastic bags and hamburger, fish, chicken and turkeys in their plastic wrappings. And we go and we buy and we eat them *and we don't think much more than that...*

It doesn't occur to us that somebody may have spent a backbreaking day cutting the grapes from the vine or pulling the potatoes from the earth for minimum wage. This weekend I met a Guatemalan man who went to work to milk cows at 3am – this was his work and perhaps when I drink milk, I will be more thoughtful.

And we don't want to think too much about the *animals* that used to live and breathe – and are now our dinners. This was brought to my attention vividly by a friend of mine. He has five children and he lives on a farm – at Thanksgiving he told me he killed the rabbits – "it is hard to do

this” he said “and yet we use them to live”– he said his family is mindful of when they choose to have meat with supper. They have an *appreciation* for where it is from.

*Thanksgiving and appreciation* are words that are very close - you can't have one without the other. One of the lovely things I see once in a while at a restaurant is when a family takes the time to say grace before they eat their meal. *In their thanksgiving* they are *appreciating* the God who is the source.

In Deuteronomy there is recorded, a very old Thanksgiving ceremony where a person would bring the first of their harvest and give it to God. And they recited from memory a very old story, a creed really, that reminded them of when they, as a people, were down and out and kept as slaves in the land of Egypt and how God brought them out of Egypt and led them through the Wilderness and brought them – where? To the Promised Land, the Land of Milk & Honey in other words, to their home.

They would give the priest the basket of the harvest and in the very act of giving they would remind themselves of *who* brought them safely to a good land. hey reminded themselves that God watched over them, protected them and provided for them.

Because the trouble is of course that we *do forget* – we forget that God is our Provider, the one and only one we can rely on, the one who opens his hand and gives us of his bounty.

For us, Thanksgiving – that is thanksgiving to God should be *a way of life*, and *not an event* or as I used to tell the young people *an attitude of gratitude*.

But it's hard to be thankful in our society: if you have listened to the language of advertising, you would have noted that the language over the years has *changed*. *You used to be a customer* –that's a word that implies a relationship, a respectful interaction.

Now? Well, now you are a *consumer* – which doesn't imply a relationship at all just a *pardon the pun* a *gobbling entity* that draws everything into itself. Consumerism lends itself to *entitlement*. Consumerism's motto is "*It's all about me*".

Consumerism is an infectious idea- it gets under our skin and makes us see the world in a very self-centered way. Consumerism is corrosive and poisonous to our spirituality, and we start to even see God in self- serving terms – what can you do for me? we are crass enough to ask the Divine.

Making thanksgiving a *daily spiritual practice* and a *central part* of our Christian life *is important medicine* for a healthy spirituality.

Thanksgiving should be the starting point of our prayer life for in it we acknowledge God's greatness and goodness, and we remind ourselves of God's faithfulness and compassion.

Thanksgiving reminds us also of the reality that we are a part of creation *and not all* of creation – and as we with humility acknowledge this, we are reminded of our obligations given to us in Genesis to care for the world and the creation around us. To be stewards of creation.

Please friends do not let Thanksgiving just be one day of your year. Let it be a daily joy to you and an honour to our God. Let it be a way of life rather than an event in your year. Let it be a reminder to ourselves that we are in a relationship with a wonderful generous God whose pleasure it is to give good gifts to his children.