

Shared Blessings

Ruby Shelly shares this Thanksgiving story:

“Thanksgiving was only eight days away.

Michelle, who teaches in our mid-week children's program,
Decided to ask her preschoolers
About the upcoming holiday.

She thought it would be fun to have the class
Playfully correct some wrong ideas about Thanksgiving.

‘Now let me see,’ she says, ‘Thanksgiving.’

‘That's the day when we think about all the stuff we have.
And how we want more things than anybody else has.’

‘And how we don't care about anybody but ourselves.
And’

‘No!’ the kids started to yell. ‘No-o-o!’
‘That's not Thanksgiving, Miss Michelle
That's Christmas!’”

~~

A family gathered around the Thanksgiving table
And admired the feast in front of them.

From the youngest to the oldest
Everyone oohed and awed.
Everything was just perfect;
From the red tablecloth
And the beautiful china and silverware
To the wonderful display of food!

When it came time for the blessing
The parents asked their youngest

Shared Blessings

A five-year-old boy to say grace.

He first looked at the turkey and gave thanks for it.

He said that though he hadn't tasted it yet
He just knew it would be delicious.

After then he started in thanking everyone and everything
Who played a part in it.

He thanked his mother for cooking it
His father for buying it

He thanked the grocery store clerk at the checkout line
The people that put it on the shelf

He thanked the company for processing it
The farmer for growing it
The mill who sold the turkey's feed.

He thanked the trucker who brought the feed to the farm.

He traced that turkey's life from the egg
To its place on the Thanksgiving table
Thanking them all for their contribution.

He finally stopped, looked around and asked
"Did I leave anybody out?"

Well . . . did he leave anybody? Yea? Who? God!

"Oh yea," he said, "I was just getting around to him!"

~~

In our previous pastorate
The congregation was deeply connected
To the rhythms of farm life.

Shared Blessings

In the spring, we held a “Blessing of the Tractors.”

Farmers would bring their tractors
To the church on a Sunday afternoon
And we’d pray for a safe and productive season.

In the fall, we’d place on our church sign
“Prayers for a Safe Harvest”

And on the Sunday before Thanksgiving
We’d have a Harvest Home Service
And Thanksgiving potluck.

I’m so glad West Richmond decided to do this.

Though we may be somewhat removed
From the cycles of food production
We are to be keenly appreciative of it.

~~

As I understand it, it has been a tough year for farmers.

Prices has plummeted due in part
To China’s retaliatory tariffs.

Most areas saw a terribly wet fall
And farmers had trouble getting crops in.

Farmers are just glad to have it all behind them.

Still, I do not know many farmers
Who leave God off their prayer list
During grace at the Thanksgiving table.

~~

There is, however, a spirit of rugged independence in the US

Shared Blessings

An attitude of self-reliance

A “I did it all by myself” kind of mentality.

A recent survey of corporate executives attests to this:

Those who had a net worth of over a million dollars

Were asked the question:

“Who or what do you credit your success?”

99% credited hard work

97% credited intelligence

83% credited a high IQ.

63% credited being the best in every situation.

32% credited being “lucky!”

Statistically, no one credited God for their success.

Their success related solely to their self-reliance.

In the classic movie *Shenandoah*

Jimmy Stewart stars as Charlie Anderson

A Virginian farmer trying to keep his family

Out of the Civil War.

With one empty place set for his wife who is deceased

And with his children gathered around the supper table

Charlie stands up to speak beginning a yearly tradition:

"Now your mother wanted all of you raised as good Christians, and I might not be able to do that thorny job as well as she could, but I can do a little something about your manners."

This is Stewart's prayer:

Shared Blessings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lzzyZIM-kVU>

"Lord, we cleared this land, we plowed it, sowed it, and harvested it. We cooked the harvest. We wouldn't be here, we wouldn't be eatin', if we hadn't done it all ourselves. We worked dog-boned hard for every crumb and morsel, but we thank you just the same anyway, Lord, for the food we're about to eat. Amen."

A prayer from a rugged American!
Yes, Americans are hardworking folk, no question.

And through their hard work they've proven successful.

But I know many other people in other countries
Who work just as hard . . .
Are just as innovative . . .
Are just as faithful . . .

Who just cannot get a break.

Think about it, how did we end up
Fortunate enough to live the lives we live?

From Christianity Today:

"Shall I thank God at this Thanksgiving?

Why was I born at this time in the history of the world?

*Why was I born in a spotless delivery room
In an American hospital*

*Instead of a steaming shelter
In the jungle of the Amazon or a mud-hut in Africa?*

Shared Blessings

*Why did I have the privilege of going to school
With capable instructors*

*While millions around the world
Without a school book sit or squat on a dirt floor?*

*How does it happen that my children
Are tucked into warm beds at night with clean sheets*

*While millions of babies in the world
Make their beds out in the cold?*

*Why can I sit down to a warm meal
Whenever I want to and eat too much*

*When millions will know all their lives
The gnawing pains of hunger?*

*Do I deserve to share in such wealth?
Why me and not other millions?*

~~

Being thankful to God at Thanksgiving.

We live in a prosperous and privileged society
And for this alone, we should drop to our knees
In humble thanksgiving to God.

What follows true thanksgiving then
Is a spirit of generosity.

Thanksgiving and generosity go together.

~~

Henri Nouwen writes:

Shared Blessings

Thanksgiving is first of all a North American feast. The nation is affluent and has more than it needs. The realization that what we have is a gift can deepen our desire to share this gift with others who cry out for help.

When we bless the fruits of the harvest, let us realize that blessed fruits need to be shared. Otherwise the blessings turn into a curse.

~~

In the Gospel of Luke

Jesus tells the parable of the rich fool.

Luke 12:16-21 (NIV)

¹⁶ And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷ He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’

¹⁸ “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹ And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.””

²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’

²¹ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

~~

An important lesson for affluent Americans.

Being rich towards God

Means that what we have is not ours alone.

It is a gift to be shared.

Shared Blessings

We're only hoarders if we fail to share blessings.

Being rich towards God is to being rich toward neighbor.

“For what you have done to the least of these
My brethren, you have done unto me.”

~~

*I do not thank thee, Lord,
That I have bread while others starve;*

*Nor yet for work to do,
While empty hands solicit heaven;*

*Not for a body strong,
While other bodies flatten beds of pain.*

No, not for these do I give thanks.

*But I am grateful, Lord,
Because my meager loaf I may divide;*

For my hands that may move to meet another's need;

*Because my double strength
I may expend to steady one who faints.*

Yes, for all these do I give thanks!

*For hearts to share
Desire to bear
And will to live*

*Flamed into one by deathless Love—
Thanks be to God for this!
Unspeakable! His gift!*