



November 21, 2017

THE POWER OF THANKSGIVING

As an experiment, the journalist A.J. Jacobs decided to spend a year trying to obey every commandment in the Bible at the most literal meaning. Jacobs, who is from a non-practicing Jewish family, wrote about his experience in his book *The Year of Living Biblically*. He is primarily a comedian, so he enjoys the humor in letting his beard grow long and the dietary requirements. But he is also willing to be changed by the experiment. In one section, he describes the affects of following the commandment to give thanks to God.

Thanksgiving, that I'm getting into. Today, before tasting my lunch of hummus and pita bread, I stand up from my seat at the kitchen table, close my eyes, and say in a hushed tone: "I'd like to thank God for the land that he provided so that this food might be grown." Technically, that's enough. That fulfills the Bible's commandment. But while in thanksgiving mode, I decide to spread the gratitude around. "I'd like to thank the farmer who grew the chickpeas for this hummus. And the workers who picked the chickpeas. And the truckers who drove them to the store. And the old Italian lady who sold the hummus to me and told me 'Lots of love.' Thank you."

The prayers are helpful. They remind me that the food didn't spontaneously generate in my fridge. They make me feel more connected, more grateful, more grounded, more aware of my place in this complicated hummus cycle. They remind me to taste the hummus instead of shoveling it into my maw like it's a nutrition pill. And they remind me that I'm lucky to have food at all. Basically, they help me get outside of my self-obsessed cranium.

Jacobs didn't really believe in the God he prayed to, but his mind was open just enough. The practice of thanksgiving changes us from the inside out. It is a powerful act. Maybe you'll have a chance to practice it soon.

I'll see you in church.

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster
Senior Minister