



November 7, 2018

AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE....

A few weeks ago while distributing food, clothing and other necessities to the homeless with our youth through the Outdoor Church of Cambridge, I was witness to the power of gratitude. The Outdoor Church is a ministry of the First Church of Cambridge that is always in need of small groups of volunteers to support them in the distribution of meals to those in need in Harvard and Central Squares.

Outdoor Church volunteers are asked to bring sandwiches, juice, toiletries and new pairs of socks to distribute. There are hundreds of folks in these areas who call the sidewalks, alleyways and cemetery areas their homes. They struggle day to day to survive. They have been dealt a difficult hand in the card game of life and face difficult challenges that many of us will never know. Yet, there is this profound sense of gratitude that seems to propel them forward -- for they will tell you about their struggles only after -- well after -- they have shared their gratitude for things like warm weather, a pair of socks, or simply having a kind person to talk to. In conversation, they will most likely shower you with gratitude as they tell you how thankful they are for your presence in that moment. Being a recipient of this sort of gratitude is overwhelming and sometimes makes you feel unworthy of its gift. This sort of gratitude changes hearts in profound ways and I watched as the teens (and adults) were humbled by the exchanges they had with the folks of this community.

There is no denying that gratitude is a force that encourages and empowers. There has been study after study that supports how holding an "attitude of gratitude" can be transformational. And there are studies that support the benefit of finding gratitude in even the darkest of moments. I have been witness to the transformational effects of gratitude. There is no denying its role in healing and wholeness.

I believe that is from a place of gratitude that we become more aware of how God is calling us to do God's work in the world. It is from a place of gratitude that we seem to be more compelled to answer God's call and to do those things necessary to help heal a world that seems so wracked by uncertainty, loss, hatred, and confusion.

It is not always easy to be grateful. Life is hard. However, as people of faith, we are called to travel this journey with a certain hopefulness. We are called to be thankful in all things. And being thankful in all circumstances certainly requires a bold sort of hopefulness. Life is messy and finding our attitude of gratitude is not as easy as it sounds. Maybe, it is because we cannot "find" gratitude. Maybe, it is because gratitude finds us....

I, for one, am thankful for the fact that God is persistent in letting us know just how very loved we are. Because God keeps showing up – even when we do not realize it. God shows up in our doubt, in our loss, in our pain, in our worry, and in our joy. God shows up all around us – in the form of a stranger, or a friend, and even in a small child in a manger.

My prayer for us all, on this very day, in this very moment -- is that our hearts find themselves opened wide by the work of God's Holy Spirit. I pray that we find ourselves overwhelmed by the gift found in realizing the ways in which God is at work in us, through us, and around us in all our moments. I pray that God will help us to allow gratitude to transform our lives in wondrous and mysterious ways.

May the love of Christ continue to form in us all an attitude of gratitude.

Peace and Joy,



Rev. Anne Marie Holloway