



November 25, 2020

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. -1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

In the oldest Christian scripture, Paul described a constant practice of rejoicing, praying, and giving thanks, no matter the circumstances.

But how do we give thanks when the circumstances are so different from what we had hoped?

This cultural season that we call “the holidays” begins with a Thanksgiving week that looks far from normal. We are grieving our losses, and we are weary of all that we are missing in order to limit the spread of a terrible virus. It is easy to list the things that are hard, and hard to list reasons to be thankful.

I suggest making two lists this week.

The first can be list of grief, including losses and all that you are missing: the people you can't see, the meals you can't share, and the beloved traditions that have been put on hold. The pain of this list is real. Grief and loss are heavy burdens.

The second list is for giving thanks. It may not include the usual things. For instance, I won't be giving thanks for being together with our children or extended family this year, because we are all staying safely at home. Still, the practice of giving thanks in all circumstances may open your heart to notice other gifts. Take time to create this awareness, and write it down. Making the list really does make a difference.

Paul's counsel is practical. Giving thanks is more than a spontaneous reaction to getting everything we want. Giving thanks is a spiritual practice that focuses our attention on the abundance of gifts that we already have.

Remember that giving thanks can co-exist with grief. We can grieve traditions that we miss and give thanks for the new traditions that arise in their places.

Here's a prayer for Thanksgiving this year:

O Gracious God, thank you for gifts of comfort and love, even when they arrive in different forms. Thank you for love that holds me secure, even when I feel like I'm falling apart. Thank you for the courage of people who give care, act with kindness, and seek justice. Thank you for your steadfast love, and for the resiliency of hope. Amen.

Peace,

Rev. Matthew Wooster
Senior Minister