

October 13, 2024
Thanksgiving Sunday

Meditation: “Thankful? Thankful for what?”

On Wednesday afternoons for the past month, a small group has gathered to learn about spiritual disciplines. Actually, we aren't just learning about them, we are practicing them too. In the process, we are deepening our faith, learning about God, and learning about ourselves. One of the spiritual disciplines I practice is to use the revised common lectionary for planning worship, rather than preaching in a series of series, or some other method of selecting scripture each week. This week, when I read the lessons prescribed for today, I was ready to ditch the discipline.

The Psalmist wrote, “When God brought Zion’s captives home, it seemed to us like a dream.” With Hamas still presumably holding Israeli captives a year after the raid on Israel, and Israel bombing Gaza into a pile of rubble, and Iran firing missiles at Israel, and Hezbollah and Israel mixing it up in Lebanon and northern Israel, and Israel raiding the West Bank, and..... This becomes a very challenging lesson. It has been over a year of death and destruction. If God is able to bring the captives home, why hasn't that happened yet? What is God waiting for?

Well perhaps one of the other lessons might be less challenging. Joel. Surely the writing of the prophet deserves a look. “God has poured down for you abundant rain.” Oh dear. Between Helene and Milton, the south-eastern states are flooded. And so are many countries in central, and eastern Africa, central and eastern Europe, Asia, and Japan, to say nothing about the snow in South Africa. Even the Sahara desert in Morocco is flooded with rain. Did God not get the memo that enough is enough? I mean, God did, after all, put the bow in the sky as a reminder of God’s covenant with Noah and all life

never again to drown all life on earth. This lesson is just as troubling as the psalm.

The gospel must be more comforting. “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” So, we have captives held by enemy combatants. We have war on practically every continent. We have extreme weather events on practically every continent. And God says, “Do not worry about your life!” Really? God also said, “which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life?”

My mother had many sayings. One of them was, ‘worry about the things you can control and stop worrying about the things you can’t control.’ Well, I can’t control warfare and violence. I can’t control the weather. I can’t even add a single hour to my life by worrying about it, in fact I’m more likely to shorten it by excessive worry. What can I control? Well, for starters, I can pay attention to the relationships I have in my life. I can pay attention to my relationship with Barbara. I can pay attention to my relationship with Christina, and Simon, and Samson too. And, I can pay attention to my relationship with God. There we go, right back to spiritual disciplines.

The epistle said, “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.” I can do that. I can pray. I can pray for others. I can pray for the end of violence and war. I can pray that our leaders would be filled with wisdom and compassion, and that they would practice righteousness. I can pray for survivors of natural disaster. And, I can also offer up prayers of thanksgiving. You were wondering when I’d get to that word, weren’t you?

Why am I thankful? Because I know that I am blessed. I am thankful to be living here in south-western Ontario where there is no active war, or life-threatening natural disaster. I am thankful that I have work, I have shelter, I have a little money in the bank, I have food in the cupboard, I have seasonally appropriate clothing in my closet, I have friends, and an amazing wife, and a wonderful daughter who has a good husband, and they have work, and shelter, and a baby of their own. And, for the time being, everyone in my family has relatively good health. I'm thankful for life and that male pattern baldness does not hurt.

What about you? What are some of the things you are thankful for?

I'm thankful for a sense of humour that helps me get through the tough moments. I'm thankful for all of you, and for your ministries in this community and beyond for the last 168 years. I'm thankful for God, whose truth stands against all the lies and deceits of this world, and who helps us to discern the difference between the lies and the truth. I think the call to prayer, at least for today, is a good call. Tomorrow? Tomorrow we will have to do something more than just pray, but for today let us give thanks to God in song.