

Pastor Jon's Thanksgiving Eve Sermon, November 25, 2020

Blessed thanksgiving to you all.

Abraham Lincoln finally heeded the request of author and magazine editor Sarah Hale, in 1863, to declare Thanksgiving a National Holiday. At the height of the Civil War, Lincoln made a proclamation entreating all Americans to ask God to “commend to his tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife” and to “heal the wounds of the nation.” He scheduled Thanksgiving for the final Thursday in November, and it is celebrated on that day every year.

Our Thanksgiving holiday was born out of grief and strife in our country? In my opinion, we need Thanksgiving and Christmas more than ever this year. Saying thank you to God in the midst of our personal and national struggles is an act of faith.

It is true, we seem to be more thankful after we come through a difficult times in our lives. And that thankfulness spills over into serving others.

In our first reading from 2nd Corinthians, the apostle Paul took up an offering among the Corinthians to help Christian Church in Jerusalem. This reminds me as a kid when missionaries would come to our church with their slide projector, tell their story, and people would give to their mission. Paul says in your giving, “you will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us.” And in order to receive the blessing Paul is describing, the giving should be willful and cheerful.

Then in our Gospel, Jesus healed 10 lepers. Speaking of hard times, lepers lived in leper colonies. They had to quarantine from their families and friends. Sounds familiar. When Jesus honored their request to be healed, he told them to go to the priests to be declared clean so they could return to their

families and community. But one of them, a foreigner, returned and said thank you. He was a Samaritan, a natural enemy of Jews. Jesus lifts up this example of thankfulness to God as the other nine didn't bother to say thank you. For some reason, Jesus is lifting up this posture of thankfulness.

So much has been taken away from us by this pandemic. But there are blessings all around us. Take the time to thank God and thank those around you who offer you grace and service... especially our essential workers.

Blessed Thanksgiving to you all.