

St. Luke's Episcopal Church  
Homily for Sun. Apr. 25. 2021 by Kathy Hansen

I want to tell you that I had really great plans for this weekend. I had planned to pull weeds. They are getting so high that Bell can barely be seen among them and I have been too busy to get to them for a month or more. So, I was really looking forward to being able to get out there and do something about them.

When Holly called to say Jackie has the flu and she wanted to have a meeting, my first thought was, Make Plans. God Laughs. Because I knew that I would not get through a meeting on how to handle the absence of the Deacon without volunteering to give the homily. First off because I can't resist the challenge, and second because no one else ever seems to want to do them.

There was an hour before the meeting to pull weeds, so I rushed out, plunked down my kneeling pad and shortly realized that the actuality is more like, Make Plans, God Makes Better Plans. Here are the oak saplings spreading overhead, the Miner's Lettuce turning red and yellow underneath and the long grasses practically leaping out of the leaf mulch. A beautiful day, a happy job and plenty of time to think. What better time to think and pray about a homily?

So, that is all to say why I am here instead of Jackie. She has the flu and I had time to think of something to say. Hopefully it will be helpful. It is something that I was thinking about all during Lent. Kind of an unfinished thought. If it gets stuck in your mind too and you get any insights, you could share them with me.

Like many people, I usually give something up or take something up for Lent.

Over the years, I have done your standard giving up chocolate or meat or butter, anything I have thought I might be developing an unhealthy attachment to. – One year I gave up church for Lent.

And some years, of course, it is more fashionable to take something up – probably my favorite is to take up writing one haiku per day. But sometimes I take up a daily walk or writing a daily letter to a congressman – This is not one I am very successful at keeping.

This year, I gave up reading or listening to the radio while eating. I am a single woman who eats most meals alone so it is one of my great delights, my privileges, to prop a book against a bag of apples at the breakfast, lunch and dinner table and dive into some wonderful plot line. Or to catch up on Morning Edition or All Things Considered.

Conscious Eating – paying attention, being grateful for the things that are nourishing me. No more slipping away and eating my omelet without noticing it. Sounds like a great Lenten activity. It is a great Lenten activity.

In such a situation, it is only logical to start praying. “Lord, I thank you for these eggs, and the hens that laid them. I thank you for this avocado and those who grew and picked it and brought it to market. Lord, I thank you for this cheese. For that matter, I thank you that I am able to have all of this food and choose to have an omelet for breakfast. I thank you for the fridge and the stove to keep and prepare it. Thank you for the table here and the house and thank you for the job that enables me to live here and for the wonderful people who are my friends as well as my employers...I am really blessed. It is amazing”

As are all of us, I might add, in our various ways. We are unreasonably blessed. Blessed beyond measure, drenched with blessings in fact. And if you don't believe me, waking up in the morning and feeling all the

aches and pains in bones that are every morning a day older, try stretching your feet down into the corner of the bed and contemplating for a minute or two what it must be like waking up under a bush. Try standing in a hot shower and imagining having to walk miles every day to fill up a can with water so your children have something to drink.

In a world with these great disparities, we have to know that we are unreasonably blessed.

“Lord, thank you for my children.”

About two weeks into Lent, with all of this conscious eating, I began to have an odd thought.

Was God really pleased with my saying thank you for the personal blessings of my life?

Well, of course we know that gratitude is good. We know this if for no other reason than it has a good effect on us. But consider this:

If you are the parent of multiple children, and you have provided for those children, a wonderful meal. You put it on the table and the children begin to wander into the room. But the first child to get to the table gathers up all the food and hoards it away. Then that child says to you – “Oh my goodness – this is so amazing, so delicious – Thank you for blessing me with this wonderful bounty”

Are you pleased?

We believe that God is good. That God cares for all of creation and God’s will is health and happiness for every living being. But we also know that there are incredible disparities in the health and happiness in the world. How insulting it must be when we say to the God who loves all of us “Thank you for blessing me,” as if perhaps we were God’s favorite children. As if, because of the creed we say, or the fact that we

have worked hard all our lives, or because we have tried hard to be good people, that explains why we have so much more to be thankful for.

“Thank you, Lord for our country, and the right to worship together openly, to exchange ideas freely, to speak our minds. Thank you for its resources and its strength in the world.”

Now some of you have actually told me this, though it is hard sometimes to remember. The blessings that we have are not at all because of who we are. They are because of who God is. And the disparities are not because of who God is. They are because of who we are. We are not God’s favorite children, because God doesn’t have favorite children. The rain falls on the earth and the concrete. The sunlight warms what it can touch. Often, what we will let it touch.

God’s blessings are abundant, profligate even and if we happen to be the first child at the table sometimes. We cannot assume that the whole spread is for us.

“Lord, we thank you for safety. Being able to walk in the streets without much fear of death. For doctors, for people who fight for us, who keep watch in the night.”

The fondest wish of every parent is that their children will learn to care for each other. How often have the parents among us said that one word – share! And this also some of you have said to me as you brought a pan of food for ECHO or a bag of produce for the Farmer’s Market, or stacked a case of tuna under the altar – “God has given me so much, I am thankful to be able to pass some of it along.”

“Lord, thank you for those who teach us.”

So. Conscious eating still – Lent seems like a long time. I was beginning to get the idea – Saying thank you is just the words. Feeling thankful is

the beginning of a change of heart - the heart of abundant, profligate giving. Doing thankful is growing up. Becoming more like our parent.

“Lord, thank you for the line of light as the sunrise touches the top of the western hills. Thank you for the sound of happy children playing on a playground. Thank you for this iris that bloomed here without a gopher eating it.”

If we are really God’s children, we might grow up to be like God.

First, we remember to notice what we have to be thankful for.

Conscious living.

Second, we reflect on the utter unreasonableness of it all – that we are undeservedly given it all.

Third, we ask ourselves every time we get to that point, “how do I share this.” This food, this shelter, this joy of relationship, this safety and freedom, this beauty? Those are actually hard questions. Food, oh not so hard. Shelter, how do I share my house – not so easy. Children, jobs, countries? These are the questions of a lifetime. They lead us into considering what those things really mean to us. How do they touch us at the elemental level. Financial and physical security, feelings of self-worth, comfort, the joy of relationship, of creativity and simply seeing and experiencing. How can we share these things? How can we help others to experience to have these things?

So, as Merritt would say, this week: Whenever you say thank you to God, whenever you feel blessed, challenge yourself also to ask, “How can I share this blessing?”

Let us pray,

Lord you have give us so much. Give us one more thing. Give us hearts that truly want to share. In Jesus name, Amen.