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Thanksgiving

As you read this we have celebrated Thanksgiving this past weekend. Perhaps you are (finally) on your last leftover turkey sandwich. The fridge looks pretty bare after all the good stuff that was crammed in there is now gone. How did you celebrate Thanksgiving? Did you gather with family? Did you carve pumpkins with your kids? Did you get away, one last weekend at the cottage or trailer? However you choose to celebrate this Thanks Giving weekend I hope you had a good time.

Perhaps the more important question ought to be not HOW, but WHY we celebrate this day.

The very first ?Thanks Giving day? in Canada took place in 1578. The British explorer Martin Frobisher landed in the ?New world? and gave ?thanks? for making it safely across from England.

Traditionally ?Thanks Giving? celebrates the end of the harvest. On January 31, 1957 the Canadian Parliament declared that on the 2nd Monday in October Thanks Giving would be ?A day of general thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which has been blessed? The celebration was moved to this date because the original date kept falling in the same week as Remembrance Day ceremonies. Thanks Giving then is first and foremost a harvest festival. But we live in a place where we do not experience food shortages because of poor harvests. Canada is a rich and fertile country that grows an abundance of crops. What is not grown here gets shipped from all over the world. Just step in your local grocery store and you will not find empty shelves. Sadly we waste more food than what we consume.

I do think that the meaning of Thanks Giving has expanded over the years. Canada went from a mostly agricultural society to a society where agriculture only makes up a small fraction of our nation.

Thanks Giving is (hopefully) a day where we stop and reflect how good we have it or rather how blessed we are as a nation and as individuals. Our nation is blessed with prosperity and peace. Canada constantly ranks in the top 5 countries of the best places to live. (# 3 in 2014). We have a stable and democratically elected government. There is universal health care for those who need it. Education is available to all. We live our lives in safety and free of fear. As Canadians we can and do travel freely abroad. Even our individual lives reflect God's graciously blessings and gifts to us. Most of us lead comfortable and stable lives. We have a roof over our head, enough to eat, and are employed. We have comfortable homes in a safe community. While there undoubtedly challenges and difficulties we are able to handle most of them through family or community support and a government social network. We are a ?Blessed? people.

In the Gospel of Luke we read of ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19) Leprosy in Jesus' days was like a death sentence: no known cure, people slowly wasted away till they died. They were also excluded from regular society: they were shunned, unable to work living on hand outs from family or those who took pity on them. In this text ten lepers have banded together, perhaps to make their excistence a little more bearable by not suffering all alone. They come to see Jesus. That is to say they call out to Jesus from a distance since they were not permitted to come close to healthy people. Jesus takes pity on them and heals them: a day of Thanks Giving , but only one of them, a Samaritan (a hated foreigner) turns around and thanks Jesus for his miraculous healing, his heart overflowing with gratitude. But what happened to the other nine? Where they not grateful?; Perhaps too much in a hurry to join regular society again?

Real gratitude takes time and effort to express. Nor can it be limited to just one day a year. Real gratitude is a lifelong all consuming attitude that fills our everyday life. How can we limit our gratitude for all that God has given us to just one day per year? (Do your love your spouse only on your anniversary?) We need to show gratitude each and every hour of each and every day!

Not only that, I believe that God's gifts to each of us comes with responsibility:

Think of the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. All that we have and have been given belongs to God

One day we will have to an account of our stewardship of what we have received. God never does anything in you that He wants to stay with you! What God has done for you or in you He longs to release through you. In other words God has richly blessed you in order that you may be a blessing to others. How have you, as an individual, been a blessing to others? How have God's gifts been released into this world through you? Allow this Thanks Giving to change your life:

You have received much, so be grateful and give thanks always.

You have been blessed, so be a blessing to those around you.

?Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you? (I Thess. 5:18)

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