

Coop's Scoops # 113 Sermon and Liturgy, Thanksgiving: October 11, 2020

Sentence: May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts; that we may know what is the HOPE to which He has called us, (See Ephesians 1: 17,18)

Readings:

Deuteronomy 8: 7-18 Psalm 65 2 Corinthians 9: 5-15

On this Thanksgiving Sunday, I encourage you to read the Psalm aloud while looking outside or enjoying the beauty of these photos:



Psalm 65

Thanksgiving for Earth's Bounty and Beauty

Praise is due to you,

O God, in Zion;

and to you shall vows be performed,

² O you who answer prayer!

To you all flesh shall come.

³When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us,
you forgive our transgressions.

⁴Happy are those whom you choose and bring near
to live in your courts.

We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,
your holy temple.

By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance,
O God of our salvation;

you are the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas.

⁶ By your^[a] strength you established the mountains;
you are girded with might.

⁷ You silence the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples.

⁸ Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs;
you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.

⁹ You visit the earth and water it
you greatly enrich it;
the river of God is full of water;
you provide the people with grain,
for so you have prepared it.

¹⁰ You water its furrows abundantly,
settling its ridges,
softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.

¹¹ You crown the year with your bounty;
your wagon tracks overflow with richness.

¹² The pastures of the wilderness overflow,
the hills gird themselves with joy,

¹³ the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,
the valleys deck themselves with grain,
they shout and sing together for joy.

The Collect: Creator of the fruitful earth, you made us stewards of all things. Give us grateful hearts for all your goodness, and steadfast wills to use your bounty well, that the whole human family, today and in generations to come, may with us give thanks for the riches of your creation. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

The Holy Gospel: Luke 17: 11-19

¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem Jesus^[a] was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he entered a village, ten lepers^[b] approached him. Keeping their distance, ¹³ they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" ¹⁴ When he

saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. ¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. ¹⁶ He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? ¹⁸ Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

The Sermon:

Thanksgiving Day is a very special occasion for many people. It is time when family and friends often make special efforts to be together, share a feast and celebrate the good things in our lives and our love for one another. Often we recite particular blessings or events which have given us joy. And that's great. But it is equally important to offer thanksgivings when we find ourselves in dire circumstances....**not for the awful things** or the great losses, but rather **FOR the Truth** that Jesus is with us in them, and that no one or no thing can ever take Him away from us. He is the perfect Rock to cling to in times of storm, and the perfect Friend to commune with in times of joy. In this pandemic time, when families will NOT gather freely and fully, where many will be alone, and where the feast is missing many faces, it is good to really think again about what brings happiness to human beings.

An Irish writer by the name of Alexander Thornton wrote in early 1800's that in order to be happy, people need three things: Something to Do, Something to hope for, and Someone to love. Our Scripture readings this morning refer to all three.

When Moses descended the fiery cloudy mountain with tablets of stone, he was bringing the first list of "**Somethings to Do**" that would make for happy living. It boiled down to live right and don't sin. In today's reading, the people of Israel are about to enter the Promised Land. They have wandered for forty years,

falling into sin and complaint and doubt, but always delivered and restored by the Lord God. Moses is telling them “Don’t forget the Lord your God by failing to keep His commandments, his ordinances, and statutes”. That is what you do to be happy! What a counter cultural message that is in our time. You want to be happy? Well buy something, or eat something, or express your sexuality wherever and whenever and with whomever you want, look good, go to the gym....so says the “I” culture. We, as Christians, need to tell our children and our grandchildren and all whom we love “To be happy, DO something...DO **this**...obey the Lord our God.” What a gift God’s “rules” are. DO not forget! Moses mostly told us what NOT to do. Jesus taught us the somethings we all need to do....things like peacemaking, helping the poor, comforting those who mourn, being meek not pompous, and through blessing and praying for not only our friends but also our enemies. Our actual work, our gifts, our challenges all differ greatly, **but we are all called to “DO”** the ten commandments and the Beatitudes. That’s number one on the path to happiness.

Paul’s letter to the Corinthians is about having something to hope for....the provision of God to bring peace and joy to His children. As God is generous to us, we are to be generous to others. We are to bless, as we are blessed. When we find ourselves in need, or distress, we have the hope, the assurance actually, that God will, through His people and through His Spirit provide for joy in our souls. We have hope in Him. For ourselves, for our children and children’s children. For the coming of His Kingdom and fruit from the ministry we offer to others. Our “somethings to hope for” will likely be quite varied, but we all need to hope lest we be overcome by despondency or apathy. I love the musical Annie, and the great song of hope she sang “The sun’ll come up tomorrow, bet your bottom dollar, tomorrow there’ll be sun”. Hope can lift our hearts from many storms with glimpses of good things to come.

In the well-loved Gospel account of the ten lepers we move into the “Someone to love” part of the happiness equation. We focus on one man, a Samaritan man, whose life one day was tragically derailed by leprosy. When it began, he (like all lepers) was put out of his village, separated from his family and friends, jobless and penniless. He met nine other lepers, and they formed a little group ... united in their misery and need to the point that “Jewish” and “Samaritan” didn’t mean “enemies” any more. They wandered in fear and loneliness, having to ring bells so that no one would ever accidentally come near. They were in a hopeless situation that no one could do anything about. Until Jesus came along! They had heard He was a healer. No wonder they cried out **“Have pity on us”**. And Jesus didn’t wave a wand or preach a lesson, He just said **“Go and show yourselves to the priests”**. I am astonished that none of them said “Hmm...Sure, **that’ll** help. We’ll just get shot.” How could they go? The priests were in the Temple, in the city, banned territory. Nevertheless, they put one leprous foot in front of another and off they went. As they went, they saw the scabs falling off, the infections clearing, and the muscles strengthening. It was a miracle. Imagine the laughter and the shouts! **“Look, Jesus is healing us”**. But then one man broke ranks and ran back to Jesus. RIGHT up to Jesus. He didn’t stop at the required 50 foot distance mark. (We are NOT after all, the first people to have to practice social distancing!) The man fell at Jesus feet, likely weeping, and saying **“Thankyou, Thankyou, Thankyou”**. Imagine how much faith he had to have to do such a thing! Jesus had said **“Go to the Priests”**. What if Jesus saw his coming back as disobedience? What if Jesus took the healing back? **This** man, it seems, cared **more about Jesus than he did about his healing**. **This** man wanted to show love to the Healer. And Jesus **affirms** his choice of love by saying “where are the other nine?” Jesus asked that not because He was sitting around sulking, waiting for them to come by and praise Him....He asked because those other nine were

missing out on an even greater blessing. Yes, all ten were healed. Only one was made well. The Greek word for “well” is **SOZA**, and it means complete and whole in body, mind and spirit. Jesus’ **power** provided the healing; the Samaritan man’s **response** of gratitude and love was the basis for being made whole. Words and deeds of thanksgiving are the building blocks for establishing and maintaining relationships. This Samaritan had found his **someone to love** in Jesus. When he arose, and finished his trek to the Priests, when he was pronounced “clean” of his leprosy, imagine the joy of his return to his home village. Walking right through the gate, finding his home and perhaps his wife, his children. Running next door to hug his best friend and co-fisherman. Knowing he could sleep in his own bed, and rise up, and go to work, and never have to keep his distance again. Tossing his leper’s bell right into the trash. That’s the thing about “wholeness” and “thanksgiving”. They go together for sure, and they get better and better and better.

On this Thanksgiving, this is my prayer for you. That you will know you have Something to Do, Something to Hope for, and Someone to Love. Even better, lots of Someone’s to love. But no matter what, you will know without any doubt that Someone named Jesus loves you! Thanks be to God and Amen.

Prayers for Today:

1/ We thank thee, O God, for the saints of all ages; for those who in times of darkness kept the lamp of faith burning; for the great souls who saw visions of larger truth and dared to declare it; for the multitude of quiet and gracious souls whose presence has purified and sanctified the world; and for those known and loved by us, who have passed from this earthly fellowship into the fuller light of life with Thee. (an anonymous prayer circa 1750, from The Oxford Book of Prayer, edited by George Appleton)

2/ For the fruit of all creation, thanks be to God
Gifts bestowed on every nation, thanks be to God
For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
Silent growth while we are sleeping,
Future needs in earths' safe-keeping, thanks be to God!

For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God!
For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God!
For the wonders that astound us,
For the truths that still confound us,
Most of all, that LOVE has found us, Thanks Be to God!

3/ Thanks God! You're the greatest!

Benediction: Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you blameless before the throne of God, be blessing and honour and glory forever, and may the blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always!