

October 11th 2020 Dt 8:7-18; Lk 17:11-19

Every year the same. While it doesn't stress me when we celebrate Christmas again and again, Harvest Thanksgiving always stresses me a bit. Every year the same message: Be thankful because there is lots to be thankful for and, by the way, you are not thankful enough. Sounds familiar?

Even though, throughout my whole childhood, my grandpa would come and pick me up in spring to plough the fields (I learned driving a tractor when I was six) and then again in harvest time to pick fruits and drive the tractor up and down the field while others were loading hay balls on two long trailers, harvest thanksgiving always seemed a bit strange for me. I wasn't one of the kids fully disconnected from the production of our food, but still, it has always been so natural for me that food comes from the supermarket and that there is always enough even in years when the radio announced a smaller harvest due to a drought or a hail storm

So the big phrases about gratefulness for enough food and health and all the big concepts, have never touched me so much. How about you?

The older I become, the more I can see health as something to be thankful for daily, but still, health is something that goes and usually comes back for many lucky in my age group.

The lepers in our Gospel story, 9 Jews and one Samáritan, wouldn't agree. They suffered from a disease for which there was no cure. Once a leper, you were damned to be an outcast forever; expelled from society and living in shame and poverty, in pain and despair.

It is easier to think about gratefulness in this story because the reason is so much more concrete.

They were sick and were healed. There is a before, a change and an after. That is different to gratefulness for abundance of food, for health as an abstract concept.

Maybe this year 2020 changed something there. Maybe, for the first time since the last World War, we experienced across generations what absence of something “given” can look like. For the first time in my life, I found myself standing in front of empty shelves, week after week after week. For the first time, I was worried about supplies for daily life, for the first time I needed to be worried daily about the health of my loved ones.

Suddenly, finding the products you were looking for made one grateful. Suddenly, no bad news about the health of family members, was a concrete thing to be thankful for – and still is.

What are we thankful for in this crazy year 2020? Did you write something on the board outside?

For us, the food supply is back to almost normal. What are the people thankful for in places on this planet where things are not back to normal? Where the shelves are still empty because the rich countries were able to fill their minus in production by being the highest bidder on the global food market while their countries couldn't? Unfair, isn't it? Why can not all countries have at least enough?

Interestingly, Jesus did not heal all lepers of his time, not even in his region. He also didn't heal all the blind, all the lame... Unfair, isn't it?

In every healing Jesus performed, the Kingdom of God was present. But we just need to look around to see that the Kingdom of God has not yet come completely. As Christians, we wait for it, we yearn for it, the day when God will fulfill all the promises given in Jesus, when God's justice will break its way and all humans will be equals as which they were created.

But as Christians we are not called to wait patiently. Jesus did not heal all the lepers, all the blind, all the lame, did not feed all the hungry. God's Blessing and healing is not a simple top-down system. God empowers some and expects them to do something with their gifts which they received. If the healed lepers used their re-gained health and social status to help other lepers and to care for them, to give them hope and faith, that is where the Kingdom starts to grow. Some are empowered with gifts and are expected to use them, to invest and not to return them to God unused.

The Kingdom of God has yet to come, but it is us who have to pave the way and prepare this world for God's universal justice and peace.

If we received certain skills, the luxury of time, health, helpful relationships, money or whatever you can think of, God wants us to invest whatever we are blessed with. That is the most wonderful way to be grateful to God.

We cannot save the world on our own but every little thing you give to society, to Church, to a charity - time, every help, support - makes a difference in this world.

And if we, who are here in Church and who have received the Blessing to know God's love, don't sit on it and guard it like a secret treasure, but carry it out into Lynn Valley, our communities and into the world, like the leper from Samaria who returned with loud praises for God, worshipping the God of Love and Healing in

Jesus, if we go out into the world as lights and bring this light and the joy of faith to others and make them lights of a God who wishes for justice and peace, that is the most beautiful way to give thanks and to worship God.