

Lets us pray: May the words You have given me, speak to the hearts of those who gather in Your name. Amen

Happy Thanksgiving!

You know, I could stand up here and tell you about all the things I am grateful for; mother's that wake you up when the alarm doesn't go off, for being able to preach today, how grateful I am to be heading to Saskatchewan and my immense gratitude for Canon Gray. I could even tell you that I am extremely grateful for difficulties I've faced, and the intimate times of comfort with the Lord.

Some of that may resonate with you, but those are some of the things I am grateful for. They may mean nothing to you.

Today's scripture passages remind us to remember. There's a pervasive theme in the Scripture, after the Exodus, of remembering the mercy of God who heard His people and led them out of Egypt, out of slavery and pain, provided a way through the Reed sea, and gave them food and guidance.

We NEED reminding to remember. God knows we are a forgetful people, so Scripture tells us over, and over, and over to remember His faithfulness; His constant presence and steadfast love. Because we remember, we know of God's character and trust Him. This is faith. This is why we make a joyful noise unto the Lord. This is why we enter His gates with Thanksgiving and praise, because we know He is good.

This is why, when the harvest comes, we give our first fruits to God, giving back a small portion in gratitude, what He has given us. In gratitude for abundance, we share His love with others in many

ways, like gathering toonies and loonies for the Canadian Food Grains.

Right before today's passage where Saint Paul urges those in Philippi to rejoice in the Lord, always and to not be anxious, // he tells them to help the women who struggle for the Gospel and to act in love the way that God has to them, and the peace that passes all understanding will guard their hearts and their minds, because they are on Jesus. He then goes into a list of what to focus on:

Whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, or praise worthy. And, in thinking on these things and doing as the people had been taught the God of peace will be with them. ---

Have you ever noticed that the more you focus on something, the more everything else fades away?

I've had a large screen TV and I've had a very, very small screen TV, but watching them was exactly the same because if my focus was on the screen, regardless of size, everything else faded away?

St. Paul is saying that focus is key to finding the peace of Christ. For instance, the more we focus on a challenge, the bigger, and bigger, and bigger it grows in our vision and soon it's really hard to see anything to be grateful for.

On the flip side, if you focus on what you're grateful for, suddenly your troubles start to shrink, allowing you to see other things.

When we focus on anxiety, loneliness, and struggles, that's all we can see.

When we focus on God and how He has loved us communally, personally, and how He is still loving on us, the others shrink. I honestly don't know how anyone gets through depression without the knowledge of God's love and the hope that it brings.

In our Gospel reading, the people are like "OK, so you did all these miracles,..." and Jesus, knows what they want. He knows that they want more of what they've experienced, and what they remember. They want more. They are remembering with their heads and not their hearts. They're not grateful.

We are a forgetful people and that's why we must deliberately remember; this is why we read scripture; this is why we enter into this place each week to praise, worship, and give thanks in our remembering.

St Paul says not to be anxious and that's ONLY possible because of what we remember, that God is "El Roi" – The God who Sees. God sees each one of you, and we can trust that, because God's proven faithfulness.

But, even with Jesus right in front of them, they didn't remember in gratitude the character and love of God, and rather they ask "what have you done for me lately."

God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow and Jesus reminds them that it's the same God who gave manna in the desert, who sustains us now, having given us the bread of life in His Son Jesus.

And so, we remember and we celebrate together, what God has done, is doing, and will do, as promised.

Today's passages reminded me an episode of The Chosen, a t.v. series of the Gospel story. In this episode, Dayenu, a song sung during celebration of the Passover; a reminder of the many blessings, mercies, and the great love, that God has poured out on His people, adding more when it would have been enough, was included. Then (with artistic licence) the characters express gratitude for more current blessings.

If you will permit me to steal a couple minutes, I'm going to show you clips of that Dayenu.

And as we watch, I invite you to think about what you could add to the slip of paper you were given, and then share your thanksgiving to God for what would have been enough without, but He graciously gave you anyway; with others, maybe after service with a stranger, maybe around the dinner table, and then consider how you could work a practice of gratitude into your daily life.

Perhaps then, as we pray, expressing desires, wants, and desperate needs, the habit of remembering and giving thanks will keep us focused on hope; hope because we know that a faithful, unchangeable, God, who has proven Himself to love us, hears our prayers.