

Thanksgiving Sunday 12 October 2025  
Joel 2:21-27; I Timothy 2:1-7; Matthew 6:25-33

Today, I want to tell you a story. Some of you may have heard the story before. It is the story of Stone Soup. There are many versions of it around. My version goes like this:

Once upon a time a stranger rode his tired horse down a back country road on his way home from a long journey. It was late afternoon and the man was tired and hungry. Ahead he saw a small village. "I'll get something to eat there and find a place for the night," he thought.

Suddenly the horse tripped, throwing the stranger to the ground. As he brushed himself off, he saw that the horse had stumbled over a rock sticking out of the ground in the middle of the road. He walked over to it and dug it out of the earth so that it would not trip anyone else. It was a splendid rock, almost perfectly round and smooth. The stranger liked the rock, so rather than throw it away, he put it in his saddle bag, climbed up on his horse, and continued into the village.

As he road past the first houses the village people stopped their to stare. He waved to several of them, but no one waved back. He got off his horse and approached a woman standing in front of a small house. "Good evening," he said cheerfully, "Could you spare a bit of food for a hungry man?"

The woman began shaking her head almost before he had finished his sentence. "We have had a poor harvest here. We are very worried that there is barely enough food for our family. I am sorry." And she walked into her house and shut the door.

The man continued to the next house where a farmer was working on his wagon. "Do you have a place at your table for a hungry traveller?" he asked. "It didn't rain during the last month before harvest," the farmer said. "What little we have is needed for our children."

At every home the stranger heard the same sad story: The harvest had been poor, there was not enough food to make it through the winter. Everyone was very worried about themselves and their immediate family.

Completely discouraged and very hungry the man sat down under a tree in the village square. "Poor people," he thought, "in a few weeks they will be as hungry as I am." Suddenly an idea hit him. He reached into his saddle bag, took out the stone and addressed the villagers. "Gentle folk of the village", he shouted, "Your worries are over. I have in my hand a special stone that will help take you through the long winter. This is a magic stone. With it you can make stone soup."

"Stone soup?" and old man repeated. "I have never heard of stone soup." "The wonder of stone soup," the stranger continued, "is that it not only feeds hungry people, it also brings people together. Now who has a large empty pot?"

Quickly a huge iron pot was found, and delivered to the stranger in a wheel barrow. "The kettle is barely large enough, but it will do," the stranger said. "Now we must fill the pot with water and start a fire." Eager hands carried buckets of water and firewood. Soon the pot was placed over a roaring fire. As the water began to boil the stranger dramatically raised the magic stone above his head, and then he gently placed it in the kettle.

"Stone soup needs salt and pepper," the stranger announced.

Two children ran to find salt and pepper. After the water had boiled for few minutes the stranger sipped the brew. "This stone makes an excellent soup, but it would be better if we had a few carrots." "We have a few carrots that we're willing to share," a farmer replied. Immediately his daughter ran home and returned with an apron full of carrots. "Its too bad the harvest was so bad," said the stranger. "Stone soup is always much more tasty when we add a cabbage or two." "I think I know where to find a cabbage," a young mother shouted as she dashed towards her home. When she returned she was carrying three large cabbages.

The stranger was busy slicing carrots and cabbages with his hunting knife. "The last time I made stone soup was at the castle of a rich man. He added a few potatoes and a bit of beef." Several people talked quietly, "A bit of beef and we can eat like rich people", they whispered. They went home and soon returned not only with beef and potatoes, but some brought milk, onions and barley too.

By the time the soup was ready it was almost dark. It was the most delicious soup that they had ever smelled and to think, it all came from the magic stone. The stranger finally declared that it was done and invited everyone to have as much as they could eat.

After everyone had eaten their full, some folk brought out their fiddles. Everyone began to sing and dance - and they continued till the wee hours of the morning. Never had the village people had such a wonderful party.

The next morning the whole village gathered to say goodbye to the stranger. As he mounted his horse a small child called out, "You forgot to take your magic stone!"

The stranger smiled. "I am going to leave the stone with you as gift of gratitude for your hospitality," he said. "Remember, as long as you make stone soup, you will never have to worry about being hungry."

As he rode off a grandfather put his arm around the shoulders of his young granddaughter and said, "Do you remember the other bit of magic that the stranger promised when you make stone soup?" he asked. "Yes," she said, "the stone brings people closer together."

Today we celebrate the goodness of our God in providing to us the bounty of earth, sea, and sky - the goodness of God who grants to us both seedtime and harvest, the goodness of God who shares with us the love that is in his heart and calls us to likewise share.

The story of Stone Soup is a story about sharing and caring when blessings seem scarce. The stone brings people closer together, and feeds those who are hungry. It reminds us that everyone, no matter how poor they may seem, has some gift or contribution they can make for the betterment of all. A gift for which we should give thanks - no matter how small that gift may seem to some.

We here in Duncan/Chemainus are blessed. Some have more - some less - but each one of us has something we can share - some way in which we can offer God's healing touch - some way in which we can come together and add to the pot that feeds all who hunger for food and drink and for warmth and love.

This Thanksgiving Sunday, like so many in the past, we here at St. John's/St. Michael's are sharing. We bring, as we do each week our offerings for God's work in this place and beyond; and we bring contributions to be shared in the community through the food bank. We have our own version of stone soup happening in this place.

But Thanksgiving is not simply about sharing, whether it be from our abundance or from our relative poverty. There are two components to Thanksgiving—the giving of Thanks and the sharing or giving of a portion of the blessings we have - be those blessings little or be they much. At heart, Thanksgiving is about trust and about faith--the trust that God will provide all we need day by day and the faith to live as God has directed us to live no matter what our circumstances may be.

In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds his disciples, that just as God saved his people from bondage in Egypt and provided for them in the wilderness, God has provided for them by sending Jesus to them. All the disciples have to do and all we have to do is to have faith in the one whom God has sent to give life to the world. Paul reminds us in his letter to the Philippians, that we should rejoice in this good news; rather than be anxious about the cares and concerns of the present, we should pause and give thanks for all that the Lord has done for us. In a similar spirit, Jesus tells his disciples, "Do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life which the Son of Man will give you." Paul assures us that when we pause to rejoice and give thanks for the gifts of God and for all that is honourable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, and excellent, we will know the "peace that passes all understanding." A peace and a fulness we experience each time we come to this altar to receive "the bread of life."

Thanks be to God who indeed has given us all that we need - blessings not just of food and drink, warmth and shelter, but blessings as well of love and acceptance, forgiveness and hope, prayer and praise, love and joy.

May we too trust in God each day and live as God leads us to live safe in the love of our brother Jesus who offered up his life for the world knowing that God would be true to his promises. Amen.