

Joel 2:21-27
1 Timothy 2:1-7
Matthew 6:25-33
Thursday Nov 23rd, 2006

Pastor Wendy Moen
You (and Me) of Little Faith

We began November celebrating All Saints Sunday giving thanks for all the saints who have gone before us and who accompany us on our way still.

Today, near the end of November, we come with grateful hearts to give thanks to God.

That first Thanksgiving – the pilgrims did not have it easy. They landed after a hard voyage crossing the Atlantic Ocean – some died enroute, others died during that first hard winter. In the spring, native people showed them what crops to plant and how to grow them. They had a small harvest in the fall and celebrated with their neighbors.

I'm not sure I would have felt much like celebrating, but they did. That first Thanksgiving was so long ago, it was a different world then. Today we take time out to give God thanks in a lavish way, each year building on traditions like mashed potatoes and experimenting with new ones, too.

As a child, it seems the whole world is celebrating Thanksgiving, but I remember when I realized that the whole world did not celebrate Thanksgiving.

My world started expanding beyond myself, my family and even this country. I saw myself and family and everyone differently with this realization. We learn about the world in school and through interactions with other cultures. In this globally transient society, it's hard to miss that there are people with other traditions, languages and ways of patterning their life. This awareness helps us to see the world at a different angle.

As we learn about the world and all of God's people, the way we see is changed. Jesus asks us to see the world from a wide angle of trust in God's love and provision.

Our gospel today is part of the Sermon on the Mount. It is taken from a rather disconnected section of verses. Jesus is talking about righteousness and fulfillment of prophecy in these middle chapters.

He knew his disciples, he knew their hearts. AND he knew that their angle of vision, their way of seeing themselves in relation to the world was not wide, but narrow.

He knew they worried about what they would eat, wear and whether they had a place of shelter. And he knew this would affect the work he had for them.

“Do not worry about your life...look at the birds of the air, the lilies of the field...will God not take care of you...Therefore I tell you do not worry about you life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?”

You of little faith, he said to them – You, he said to them,

Oh boy – ME of little faith.

I do worry; not only for myself, but also for our worrying world out there.,

I know that I shouldn't, but birds of the air don't have electric and water bills to pay. And I have yet to see a lily of the field waltz into my son's daycare and pay the bill!

And I do worry when I see men, women, boys and girls without hats and gloves and more, especially at this time of year. This past weekend many of us walked in or received donations for the Walk for the homeless. I do worry when it seems like some have fallen through the cracks human beings have made in God's provisions.

You of little faith; yes, that's me, and I suspect you, too, because the angle of our vision sometimes narrows and gets bent. Often the

angle bends inward and like the disciples, we worry about what we will wear, eat and drink. We bend in upon ourselves because we are human. We bend in upon ourselves when sufficient isn't good enough for us. We bend in upon ourselves when we give our children more and others have none. We bend in upon ourselves when we feel entitled to more than our share. We bend in upon ourselves when we don't see the possibilities in the abundance God gives us.

This bending brings worry and anxiety in the face of plenty. This bending distorts our view of today, tomorrow and the next day. Distorts the ability to see and trust God as provider. And not only our vision, but also our lives bend not toward justice, but toward our own grasping desires.

For some who don't know where the next meal comes from, life IS about food and clothing. And God's message is that you are loved. God's PROMISE is that God is with you and working to bring you what you need. That God, who knows the pain and suffering of death, also knows the pangs of hunger and hypothermia, too. And, this same God is moving the rest of us toward a wide, arching vision of justice to all people.

Some days we are not in the mood to give thanks. Perhaps you are not wondering where your next meal will come from, but you are hurting, grieving, or with troublesome health. You may be feeling less than blessed by God at this time and your sentences start with, Well, at least I'm out of the hospital, at least I still have my son, my husband...It may be hard for you to sing "Now Thank we all our God" which is soon to come after this sermon. Some days we are not in the mood to say thanks. In fact, this hymn was written in a situation that I think would be hard to give thanks. In 1637, Martin Rinkart, a German pastor and musician found himself in the walls of Eilenburg when it was overwhelmed by famine and disease. Rinkart sometimes conducted 40-50 funerals a day. His wife died and he also became ill, but survived. That is when he wrote this hymn.

At TG we gather to bear one another's burden AND to help each other give thanks, help each other to see more clearly through the lens of grace.

Amid personal pain and struggles, news of assassinations in the ME, death counts around the world and all that can bring us down from day to day, we gather to sing today. We gather, together, to sing and to give thanks. And we reach out to family and friends, known and unknown striving for the kingdom of God and its righteousness, confident that God will give us all these things, too.

Thanks be to God. Amen.