

**Texts: Luke 12: 22-31 & Job 39:1-12; 26-30**

**Title: Gratefulness sets us up for fullness.**

*Rev. Sharon Smith*

*Second Sunday in Creation 2019*

**Objectives:**

- Inviting the community to humbly accept our place in the vast universe.
- To consider the ways that greed and possessions increase anxiety.
- To explore how acceptance is related to gratitude.
- To frame the practice of gratitude as a wise practice, modelling on the natural order and leading to reciprocity.

“Today we have gathered and when we look upon the faces around us we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now let us bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as People. Now our minds are one”

These are the first words of a long Thanksgiving Address – known as:  
the words that come before all else.

They are said in unison from the very first day of kindergarten to the end of a person’s life. They are spoken in the language of the Onondaga Nation, some of whom live in New York State and some in Ontario.

This is the first of Twelve paragraphs and each one begins with where their feet first touch the earth, and they send greetings and thanks to all members of the natural world. And I mean all members of the natural world!

“With one mind, we honour and thank all the Food Plants we harvest from the garden, especially the Three Sisters who feed the people with such abundance. Since the beginning of time, the grains, vegetables, beans, and fruit have helped the people survive. Many other living things draw strength from them as well. We gather together in our minds all the plant foods and send them a greeting and thanks. Now our minds are one”

This ancient protocol sets gratitude as the highest priority.  
It teaches that we have enough  
More than enough!

Everything needed to sustain life is already here.  
A person can’t listen to the Thanksgiving Address without feeling wealthy.  
Gratitude cultivates an ethic of fullness.

*From: Braiding Sweetgrass – indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants by Robin Wall Kimmer*

Our gospel passage today in Luke's account, follows a spontaneous request from an anonymous person who is part of the crowd surrounding Jesus.

"Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."

Family money squabbles. Don't we know these.

From the time we are young calculating who gets more pocket money than who, to the comparison of gifts given at birthdays and finally to the words written on legal documents – Inheritance and wills.

Jesus' wisdom is astounding, rather than setting out to be judge or executor he invites the crowd to consider the senselessness of greed.

For we have more than enough!

For one's life does not consist of our possessions.

Therefore, Jesus says, do not worry about your life.

Learn from the ravens, the lilies, the grass...

They do not store; they do not overwork to gain more.

More than being a sermon about worry, Jesus words, here in Luke, address human greed for more, discontent, and our desire for the things we do not have.

And we are invited to learn from the natural order of Creation.

---

And perhaps the ravens, lilies and grass are whispering the word: Acceptance.

Accept your place in the order of the Universe.

This beautiful poetry of Job is certainly a wake up call.

For my zone of control in the big scheme of things is minimal.

As this legendary story goes, Job experiences all the possible types of suffering known to humankind. And in his conversations with Creator, is humbled.

God is God, and I am not.

Acceptance.

I have these internal battles though, sometimes I just can't let go the fight with God:

- When I can't stand what is going on in my life
- When I cannot see the good in what is happening,
- When I think I know best and no one is listening, when I don't know what to do next, or when I know what I want to do next, but can't do it.
- When I feel deprived, unloved, uncared for, abandoned, and left out of life

Acceptance is so difficult.

---

Brother David Steindl-Rast is a Benedictine monk living in Austria – he is a teacher and author beloved around the world. Now in his 90s, he’s lived through a world war and the end of an empire.

He was also an early pioneer, together with Thomas Merton, of dialogue between Christian and Buddhist monastics.

One of his offerings to the world is the anatomy of gratitude. You may have seen one of his Ted talks – if you haven’t seen it, google it, its brilliant.

He describes the experience of gratefulness and joy –

- gratitude wells up in our hearts and is experienced, first, as if something were filling up within us, filling with joy, really, but not yet articulate.
- And then it comes to a point where the heart overflows, and we sing, and we thank somebody; we call that “thanksgiving.”
- And this idea of a vessel that is still inarticulate until it overflows, that is also very helpful in another way. It’s like the bowl of a fountain when it fills up, and it’s very quiet and still. And then when it overflows, it starts to make noise, and it sparkles, and it ripples down. And that is really when the joy comes to itself, so to say; when it is articulate.
- And for us, for many people in our culture, the heart fills up with joy, with gratefulness, and just at the moment when it wants to overflow, and really, the joy comes to itself – at that moment, advertisement comes in and says, “No, no, there’s a better model, and there’s a newer model, and your neighbor has a bigger one.” And so instead of overflowing, we make the bowl bigger and bigger and bigger, and it never overflows. It never gives us this joy.

Our sense of not enough – our greed, our comparison, our lack of acceptance.

He says: “It’s affluent, this affluence inside that means it always flows in, it doesn’t overflow. It flows in and in and in and in and chokes us, eventually. And we don’t have to deprive ourselves of anything, but we can learn that the real joy comes with quality, not with quantity. And that’s an important distinction.”

But if we will stop, stop over-storing and instead be like the ravens, stop over working and be like the lilies, accept our lives like the grass.

If we will look at what is before us. And let our hearts fill up. Thanksgiving will flow.

But not everything that’s given to you – evokes gratefulness.

You can’t be grateful for war in a given situation, or violence or domestic violence or sickness.

There are many things for which you cannot be grateful.

“Can you be grateful for everything?” — no, not for everything, **but in every moment.**”

*Sourced from: <https://onbeing.org/programs/david-steindl-rast-anatomy-of-gratitude-dec2017/#transcript>*

Acceptance, gratitude and then, reciprocity...

Indigenous authors remind us that cultures of generosity must also be cultures of reciprocity.

If an animal gives its life to feed me, I am in turn bound to support its life.

Duties and gifts are two sides of the same coin.

“We gather our minds together to send our greetings and thanks to all the beautiful animal life of the world, who walk about with us. They have many things to teach us as people. We are grateful that they continue to share their lives with us and hope that it will always be so.

Let us put our minds together as one and send our thanks to the Animals.

Now our minds are one.”

Amen.