Springfield Presbyterian Church

November 20th, 2022

A New Thanksgiving Tradition

1. Introduction

I may not be the person you anticipated being up here at the

pulpit this morning. We were looking forward to hearing from Rev. Fern Cloud, but unfortunately, she is sick with a prolonged migraine.

So, as I come before you this morning, I’ve re-examined what I’d like to share with you, especially as we face this upcoming week where we celebrate Thanksgiving. One of the topics I wanted to talk to Fern Cloud about is the view of Thanksgiving in the indigenous world, at least in her context. The reason is that I’ve been finding Thanksgiving a bit more difficult in the last few years as I’ve been working on relearning American history. And no, this isn’t a sermon about history that is written or unwritten, but I want to come to Thanksgiving with intentionality. I want to make sure that I am in alignment with our indigenous siblings – they are children of God too and I want to ensure that I am honoring the realities of the day.

1. Scripture

I still have a long way to go in learning and I look forward to

those conversations. What I do know for certain is that giving thanks, not only this Thursday, but every day, is an integral part of being a Christian. It’s written all over our Scriptures and it was hard to pick out just two Scripture lessons that spoke about gratitude.

For instances, the Psalms are songs that are filled with thanksgivings. Yes, there are psalms that talk about anguish and pain and feeling abandoned, but these songs are usually framed within the context of faith and remaining grateful despite the challenges the psalmist is facing.

In our reading from James, we hear the proclamation that every good and generous gift is from above. Then, the reader is told how to live in a mindset of thanksgiving – from being slow to anger, quick to listen, releasing those things that only bring pain. Further, the reader is told to be a doer of the word, rather than simply a listener – this is gratitude in action.

You can look up gratitude in the Scripture and again, you’ll find, even in the most challenging of stories, these beautiful moments of gratitude. I may not know how to interpret our historical thanksgiving, but there’s no doubt in my mind that being a grateful human is a core piece of living a Christian life.

1. Turning the Tide

So, I’m going to do something here that I’ve never done within a

sermon and ask for some congregational participation. We’ll have the microphones around the pews and I want to hear from you about what makes your thanksgiving special. Is it a tradition that is unusual? How do you give thanks on that day?

I will give a short example to try and pave the way. When Bryan and I celebrated our first Thanksgiving together, it was just us at his grandfather’s dining room table. I laid out paper like a table mat and before the plates landed on the table, I filled up my piece of paper with thanksgiving galore. At the beginning, it was more profound – thanksgiving for God, giving thanks for family and friends, for the beauty of the earth. In an effort to fill up my paper, it got a bit silly but in hindsight beautiful, where my gratitude became things like – I’m grateful for each blade of grass, for the strumming the guitar, and for the roof over my head. I felt like I needed to fill up the paper and it turns out, when you push yourself to really take stock of all that you usually take for granted, it become a pretty beautiful list. That thanksgiving, we started the tradition of filling up your paper with gratitude because the day is just that – a day of remembering how important gratitude is to our life and our lives together.

Alright, now, it’s your turn. I’m opening the floor and at the end I’ll offer a prayer…

…Generous God,

Thank you for all the ways you bring gratitude into our lives. We are thankful for the traditions that you have inspired in our families and the traditions that may bloom from our sharing today. Help us, this Thursday, as we come together, to reflect on the Word, to see your call for gratitude, and to let this be just the beginning of a new way we can see our world. Thank you, God, thank you for our life in you. Amen.