

A Word from the Pastor

Greetings,

There are certain songs that seem forever connected to particular moments in our nation's history. Lee Greenwood's *God Bless the U.S.A.* is one of them. For many of us, hearing that song brings back memories of the Gulf War or the days following September 11, 2001. We remember the patriotic chorus, the waving flags, and the sense of unity that accompanied it.

But there's something about the opening lyrics of that song that deserves a little more attention.

Greenwood imagines waking up one morning to discover that everything he had worked for throughout his life was gone. It's a sobering thought. Imagine losing the things you've spent years building, saving, and working to provide. What would you have left?

As we approach Thanksgiving, that question leads me to another one: Is there a difference between being thankful and being grateful?

We often use those two words interchangeably, and there's certainly nothing wrong with that. But I think there's a distinction worth considering. Thankfulness is often our response to something good that happens to us. Someone does us a favor, gives us a gift, or helps us through a difficult situation, and we're thankful.

Gratitude, however, goes a little deeper. It's not simply a response to something we've received. It's an attitude that recognizes the goodness in our lives, even when our circumstances aren't particularly good.

Gratitude isn't simply a stronger version of thankfulness. It's a different way of looking at what we have and, more importantly, what remains when those things are gone.

Think about that for a moment. It's easy to be thankful when the bills are paid, the refrigerator is full, and everyone we love is healthy and happy. But what

happens when those things change? What happens when life doesn't turn out quite the way we expected?

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Notice that Paul doesn't tell us to give thanks *for* all circumstances. He tells us to give thanks *in* all circumstances. There's a difference.

There are things in life that we're certainly not thankful for. We don't have to be thankful for sickness, the loss of someone we love, or the struggles that sometimes seem to come one right after another. And God doesn't expect us to pretend that those things don't hurt.

But even in the middle of those difficult circumstances, we can still have gratitude. Not because everything is going the way we'd like, but because we know that God's love and faithfulness aren't dependent on our circumstances. The things around us may change, sometimes dramatically, but God remains the same.

And perhaps that's where the greatest difference between thankfulness and gratitude can be found. Thankfulness often focuses on the blessings we've received. Gratitude reminds us of the One who has blessed us.

So when you gather with your family around the table this Thanksgiving, by all means, take time to be thankful. Be thankful for the food, the family, the friends, and all the blessings God has placed in your life. Those are wonderful gifts, and we should never take them for granted.

But this year, perhaps we can take it one step further. Along with thanking God for everything we have, let's remember to be grateful for who He is. Because long after the Thanksgiving leftovers are gone, and even when the circumstances of life change, we'll still have something worth being grateful for: a God who loves us through all of the seasons of our lives.

Happy Thanksgiving.

God Bless,

Pastor Fred

Activities and Announcements

Please join us for:
Sunday School - 9:45 am
Worship Service – 11:00am
Bible Study – Tuesday's 7:00pm
Methodist Men's Breakfast – 2nd Sunday of each month

Our Food Pantry items for the **November** distribution are **Baking Items - small bags flour, sugar, oil, seasonings.**

Saturday 11/7 – 9:30am–2:00pm Blood Drive at Shiloh
Please sign up or contact Lori for an appointment time.

Saturday 11/14– **Brunswick Stew** fundraiser at Julian Lions Club.
The stew is $10.00 per quart and available for preorder. Please see Tammy Cox to place your order.

Saturday 11/28 – 9:00am Decorate the church for the Holiday Season

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A Reason to Give Thanks

After Eddie Rickenbacker and his companions were rescued after more than three weeks adrift in life rafts in the Pacific, he was asked what lesson he had learned from the ordeal.
He answered that anyone with plenty of fresh water to drink and enough food to eat should never complain.
His words still speak clearly today. Many blessings can become so familiar that we barely notice them. This Thanksgiving, pause to give thanks for clean water, nourishing food, a safe place to rest and the people God has placed in your life. Let gratitude continue long after the holiday table is cleared.

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I awoke this morning with devout thanksgiving for my friends, the old and the new. Shall I not call God the Beautiful, who daily showeth himself to me in his gifts?
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Before God, we are all equally wise and equally foolish.
—Attributed to Albert Einstein

Honoring Faithful Service



Each year on Veterans Day, we pause to give thanks for the men and women who have served our country with courage, sacrifice and devotion. Their willingness to defend freedom reminds us that service often comes with great cost.
As Christians, we are called to honor those who serve and to pray for veterans, active-duty military members and their families. We also remember that true peace comes from God, who is our refuge and strength.
May this day lead us to gratitude, prayer and renewed commitment to serve others with humility, courage and love.

Faithful Witnesses
Many churches observe All Saints' Day on November 1, a time to remember believers who have died in the faith and give thanks for their faithful witness.
The story of Christianity is filled with ordinary people who held fast to Christ in both joyful and difficult seasons. Across the centuries, countless believers have followed Jesus with courage, and many have even given their lives while bearing witness to God's love and the saving grace of Christ. Even today, Christians in some parts of the world continue to face persecution for their faith.
On this day, take time to remember our Christian heritage with gratitude. Give thanks for those who remained faithful before us, and ask God to help us follow Christ with the same courage, hope and steadfast faith.

A Thanksgiving Prayer of Gratitude

Almighty God, our Creator, Redeemer and eternal Companion, we come before you overwhelmed by the boundless goodness you bestow upon us.
On this special day, we remember how you blessed those who came to this land seeking the freedom to worship without restraint or hindrance.
We are immeasurably grateful for our heritage. We pray that our faith may be as fervent as the faith of those who left everything familiar to journey to a strange land, where they themselves were strangers.
We gather as grateful beneficiaries of your faithful servants who paid a costly price to glorify you and serve you. Mindful of the first Thanksgiving meal shared by newcomers and Native peoples, we now gather around our own tables with family and friends.
We come before you with love and deep appreciation for your constant grace and abundant gifts. The beautiful food before us is a visible reminder of your generous provision.
Ever-giving and ever-loving God, we humbly thank you for all your blessings. We ask for one gift more: the honor of your presence. Be our Guest, so that we may enjoy fellowship with you and with one another.
We pray in the name of your greatest gift to us, our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.