

Sermon 2007 Thanksgiving

Text: Philippians 4:6-13

Theme: "Thanksgiving: The Antidote to Worry"

If I could give you one gift...if I could give myself one gift...it would be the gift of being free from worry and fear. So many of the dumb things we do, think and say are driven by worry and fear. For years I have struggled with this day; Thanksgiving. I have been through Thanksgivings when I thought I had nothing for which to be particularly Thankful. Oh sure we can be thankful for the air we breathe and the fact that a meteor didn't fall out of the sky on us during the night and for Turkey, but those are platitudes. We will mouth those things because we know we **ought** to be thankful but as all of my confirmation students know, for me, **ought and should** are bad words.

You can get away with using most any foul word around me and I probably won't even notice because dirty words don't offend God so they don't offend me, but start talking about "ought" and "should" in any reference to God and my ears start smoking, and my stomach starts rolling and pretty soon I can't hold back.

"I *ought* to give more to the church." "I *should* go to church today." "I *ought* to be nicer to my neighbors." Those are

law words. We don't live under the law. We live in the rich gift of the Gospel, the glory of Jesus Christ. We are saints of God.

Don't tell me what you ought to be thankful for. Tell me what you **ARE** thankful for! And if you have trouble feeling thankful, it is not because you are having a tough year, and it is not because you don't have more blessings than you can count. It is only because your faith is weak. You hear St. Paul speak, but you don't really believe what he says. You have saving faith, but you're not putting that faith to work for you. Listen again to St. Paul:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus... for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Thanksgiving, along with prayer and supplication is the antidote for worry and fear. Do not be anxious about anything but put it in God's hands and then walk away. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts

and minds in Christ Jesus. Now I'm not there yet, but I'm getting there. I'm learning, like St. Paul to be content in all situations, to look for the good in everything and everyone and to let go of my plans and my goals and let God lead me wherever I need to go.

When I ride Metra, I don't worry and fret that the engineer might get lost and take me to Hoboken instead of Chicago. I have complete faith in that engineer. He knows exactly where he is going. Besides, the rails don't go to Hoboken without some serious switching. If I have that kind of confidence in the engineer on the train, why is it so difficult to have much more confidence in God?

Try it. Have some confidence in God today and during the prayers this morning, dump everything on God. He promises that he will be with you always, that he will turn everything for the good of those that love him; that he will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus and we will have peace...if we want it.

Amen.