



Thanksgiving Worship

By: The Rev. Mavis Currie

Call to Worship

One: The days shorten. The summer sun fades. The fields are golden.

All: Look. God is present.

One: The birds prepare for flight. Leaves crackle under footsteps. The wind whistles.

All: Listen. God is present.

One: The air cools. The fruit falls. We lift our hearts in gratitude.

All: Know. God is present here.

One: Let us worship God.

Hymn: #425– We praise you, O God

Opening Prayer

God of light and love, we lift our hearts to you in prayer, and our lives to you in worship. Hear us today and help us to listen. Set our feet again in the way of Christ. Help our lives to overflow with gratitude so

that others might know your good gifts also. We pray in the name of Jesus, the one who taught us when we pray together to say... (The Lord's Prayer).

Scripture: Matthew 6: 25–33

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Hymn: #435 – All things bright and beautiful

Reflection

Have you ever had the “shift” key on your computer get stuck? This common problem results in every document, every letter, every email appearing in all capital letters. It usually is accompanied by an apology: “SORRY! MY SHIFT KEY IS STUCK AND IT WON’T LET ME WRITE WITHOUT IT LOOKING LIKE I’M SHOUTING AT YOU!” When the shift key on a keyboard is stuck, everything looks a little different. The number 5, for example, becomes a percentage sign. The number 8 types out as an asterisk. The shift key changes everything.

In our gospel lesson today, Jesus offers words that operate a little like a shift key for his followers. “Don’t worry,” says Jesus, “Consider the lilies of the

field and the birds of the air. Look at the grasses.” His words invite a shift in thinking, a shift in perspective. Putting his words into practice changes everything.

One of the great comforts in reading scripture is recognizing that, despite the passage of time, and the differences in language and culture, we have a lot in common with the people of God from generations before. If Jesus chose to use the word “worry” four times in nine verses in today’s passage, it is fairly clear that his followers were people that lived with quite a bit of anxiety. They worried about what they wore and ate, and what was coming next in life. Not so different from us, Jesus’ first followers were a people who worried.

We live in the midst of a culture that encourages worry. Media points a finger at all that is missing in our lives and invites us to focus on those holes. You have only to open a magazine or turn on your TV, to be reminded of all the things that you don’t have. We see advertisements with titles like: “7 Gadgets Every Kitchen Needs” and headlines like “Need to lose 10 lbs in 2 weeks?” We live in a culture that focuses on what we do not have. Whether it’s a “slicer and dicer” or a widescreen TV, a thinner body, a life partner who communicates better or faster wifi, the spotlight is always on what is missing. It is in the midst of this world that focuses on the negative, that Jesus speaks to us in our gospel lesson.

“Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? **Look** at the birds of the air... **See** how the flowers of the field grow... **Seek** first God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness”.

Jesus knew that in order to truly live, we need to shift our focus. To begin to look, to see, to consider, to seek after - not what is missing in our lives, but what is already there. Like that old childhood game, “I spy with my little eye,” it’s amazing, when you start looking for something, how many items you actually discover.

Thanksgiving – even in Canada – seems to be the beginning of a season of list-making for most of us. We make grocery lists to stock up our freezers and to-do lists to ready our yards for winter. We make shopping lists for Christmas and lists of books we will read over the cold months ahead. This

Thanksgiving, may we begin a new tradition of list-making. May we press our shift keys and make a list of those people, and moments and things for which we are grateful. May we pause in our frantic worry about what's missing, and notice what's right here, right now. May we look at the birds of the air. May we see the flowers in the field. May we seek God's kingdom all around us. Then, says Jesus, there will be a shift, not just in each of us, but in our families, our communities, our churches, and our world. Gratitude breeds kindness. Thanksgiving gives birth to compassion. Counting our blessings helps us to be blessings to others. In times when it's easy to worry, what if we just pressed our shift key? What if Thanksgiving wasn't a holiday, but a new way to live?

Responsive Prayer

One: Generous God, we give you thanks.

All: For simple pleasures, garden harvests, the phone call of a friend, the long a-awaited hug from a family member.

One: Generous God we give you thanks.

All: For the colours of this season, for warm beds, and full stomachs.

One: Generous God, we give you thanks.

All: In faith, we bring our prayers.

One: For those who are alone or afraid, for those who grieve, for those who are weary.

All: In faith, we bring our prayers.

One: For leaders, and for strangers, for family and for friends.

All: Holy One, remind us that we are your partners in answering the prayers of one another Amen.

One: Amen.

Offering Prayer:

Generous God, we dedicate these gifts to the work of your church. May they bring hope where there is despair, joy where there is sorrow, and peace where there is worry or destruction. For we pray in the name of Christ, Amen.

Hymn: #802 – For the fruits of all creation

Blessing: (in unison)

May the peace of God go with us.

May the grace of God inspire us.

May the love of God comfort us.

May the joy of God dwell within us.

May our lives be filled with gratitude to the God who gives us every good and perfect gift.

Amen.

Written by the Rev. Mavis Currie, minister at Knox Presbyterian Church, St. Thomas, Ontario.