

Call to Worship (repeat 3 times slowly)

Breathing in: "I stand in awe..."

Breathing out: "...of all creation."

Prayer of Thanksgiving (Walter Rauschenbusch, 1861–1918)

For the wide sky and the blessed sun, for the salt sea and the running water, for the everlasting hills and the never-resting winds, for trees and the common grass underfoot.

We thank you for our senses by which we hear the songs of birds, And see the splendor of the summer fields, and taste of the autumn fruits, and rejoice in the feel of the snow, and smell the breath of the spring. Grant us a heart wide open to all this beauty; And save our souls from being so blind that we pass unseeing when even the common thorn-bush is aflame with your glory. Hear us, O God our creator, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

The Word

Psalm 65:1-8

God of Zion, to you even silence is praise. Promises made to you are kept— you listen to prayer— and all living things come to you. When wrongdoings become too much for me, you forgive our sins. **How happy is the one you choose to bring close, the one who lives in your courtyards! We are filled full by the goodness of your house, by the holiness of your temple.**

In righteousness you answer us, by your awesome deeds, God of our salvation— **you, who are the security of all the far edges of the earth, even the distant seas.**

You establish the mountains by your strength; you are dressed in raw power. **You calm the roaring seas; calm the roaring waves, calm the noise of the nations.**

Those who dwell on the far edges stand in awe of your acts.

You make the gateways of morning and evening sing for joy.

Living the Word

Reaching Deeper in Our Thanksgiving

The first Wednesday of the month clergy from the Hayward area gather for prayer. On November 7, as we met to share about joys and concerns, Pastor Joel Bacon from 1st Lutheran, shared about his disappointment in how our society jumps from Halloween to Christmas, sliding right over and past Thanksgiving.

Thus began a short discussion which included pointing out the struggle of accepting winter so soon after a too short summer, with Fall also disappearing before we are ready. It was also pointed out that deer hunting and football have a tendency to over shadow Thanksgiving. Thus and so, I decided to focus on Thanksgiving today, knowing that some who might benefit from this sermon would be in the woods...

I have to admit that before I began really putting my thoughts to 'giving thanks', what was on my mind – besides all of the many usual things – was the Thanksgiving meal. Last year I made too many vegetable choices, too many pies and I was exhausted by the time we sat to the table...This year I decided it would be simplified in some way, whatever that means. So I am scaling down the menu and letting someone else do the baking...we will see.

How many of you have a tradition at your house of saying what they are thankful for as the table grace before they begin eating? I thought we could begin today, so you feel prepared by Thursday. I am going to pass two

microphones, one on each side and you can alternate back and forth with your answers. I like to think outside the box, but if your answer is the same as someone else, it is OK. (Pass the Microphones.)

All good answers, none of them wrong because they are your answers. Even so, I want invite you for the next 4 days to go deeper in your thinking. Take the response you gave me and flesh it out. What does your answer represent? For example: When I say family, I then need take the time to go through a long list of relatives, beginning with those closest to me and think of the many ways they make me thankful.

Often in life the ones we are closest to are the ones we neglect the most, since we know they love us either way. For those I may not see this season – when was the last time I thought of them and told them that I really miss them? Possibly time to make a contact...

I am thankful for shelter: I am always thankful for a hot shower every morning, and often I thank God for the heat and the water, yet I don't often think of how Bob helps make that possible... I waited many years for a garage for my car. As much as I appreciate this benefit in my life, I need to thank Bob again for the benefits of having it.

Remember what you said you were thankful for? Now I am going to give you 2 minutes of silence to reach deeper with whatever your first thankful response was. Lord, take us deeper in our thanksgiving. (2 minutes of silence)

Next is my thanksgiving for this Church – for me much more than a job, even so, I am thankful for the journey into this Christian community in the 1980s, and then in 1997, from this place into pastoral ministry and then 2 ½ years ago, back here again. Being a pastor isn't always easy, yet, it is very rewarding. Building relationships with so many people and a constant exposure to building my relationship with God. That makes me very thankful.

I am thankful for the joy of my work: At the trainings I have been attending, besides giving us the breakthrough Prayer program, we have been given other tools to help our ministries and our church flourish. There are new ways to view ourselves and our mission. For instance. We had a session that shared with us that our day job – our vocation, if it is work that we are paid for or work what we do in retirement, is what we accomplish to move through the days caring for ourselves.

Yet our Real Job – the one God has called us to – is to love God and love one another: to know who we are as beloved 'Children of God' and to give of ourselves for each other. We are blessed to be a blessing...All of the ways that we serve this community and this world, how we serve our families and friends, and how we serve God. And it is so amazing to me that we are the ones who benefit by the real job of giving. We receive the blessings.

One of my pastor friends once told me that he got paid to go to meetings and do the paperwork. All of the rest (visits, prayers, preaching, serving, loving) he did that for free. The first (meetings and paperwork) were his day job, the second loving God and serving others, was his real job. What about you? think about what is your day job and what is your real job – the one that God is still calling you to, the one that makes you feel blessed.

You may find joy in digging deeper in this thanksgiving stuff. One more that came to me this week: I am thankful that there is always air for me breathe, I continue to take in air and exhale air without thinking about it. It is just there for me. Thank God!

By pausing to ponder it – just for a moment, it brought to mind a song that Michael W. Smith wrote in praise of God and things that we sometimes forget are gifts to us. It goes like this: *This is the air I breathe, This is the air I breathe. Your holy presence living in me... This is my daily bread. This is my daily bread. Your very word spoken to me...And I, I'm desperate for you, I, .I'm lost without you.*

What would happen if we would reach even deeper. Can we get to the place where we can find joy and blessings even in the frustrations? We have a cat named Cougar. She is about 15 years old and in the last year or so she has begun to complain and whine a lot! It is like a howl and is very annoying. She uses it especially when she wants in the house and when she wants out.

Thursday morning as I was leaving the bathroom, I heard her whining from a distance. I suddenly realized that Bob must have let her outside before he left two hours earlier. I ran to the door and let her in. Gave her a couple of pets to warm her back up and went on my way, but she followed me around the house for 10 minutes crabbing and howling – scolding me for not hearing her and letting her in sooner.

Usually, I put her out when she howls, but I decided I couldn't just do that this time and instead I took the time sit down and pick her up and spend some time really giving her attention and love. Guess who was blessed...It was me. If we are willing to dig a little deeper into the things that frustrate us, we can find joy. It may take some of our precious time, or other things we value most, but pets often are there to teach us sabbath care for ourselves.

What you value most...others deserve, too – pets and people and our Creator. I invite you to take time to look for joy that can be found in your frustrations. Often they aren't worth the negative reactions and are only dragging us down. Sometimes we can even find humor in them if we just think about how important or unimportant they are in the whole scheme of life.

So Thursday will come, we will get caught up in parades, football and food. Remember the Big 10? Not college football, but the 10 commandments. This morning in our Moses Bible Study we talked about the big 10. They were not given to us as a frustration to cramp our lifestyles; or as Adam Hamilton wrote in the study book: "not to deny us happiness, but to free us from the things that enslave us and to give us life." That is something to be thankful for...

Of course there are 365 days of the year to be thankful, and well we should. Yet this month is known as the 'Thanksgiving' month. After all, this week we will celebrate the beginnings, The pilgrims coming for religious freedom and to 'tame the Indians' and then finding out that they needed each other to survive together. A time of acceptance of others and sharing what we have with those who would share what they have, to combine our lives in a Godly way, no matter how everyone understands God. Another thing to be really thankful for.

We are very blessed with so much to thank God for, I am just here to invite you to reach deeper in your thanksgiving.