

## Thanksgiving Eve Worship | November 25th, 2020

Reader 1: Barb Stuart | Reader 2: Wendy Claffey | Reader 3: Michelle Liebhard

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### Welcome

Hello and welcome to our Thanksgiving Eve worship service. As we have this time of worship and thanksgiving today, I invite you to stop and take a moment. Breathe. Notice who and what's around you. Bring to mind those people whom you love, but aren't with right now. Think about what's beyond these four walls. This is a practice of mindfulness, of fully realizing and noticing each moment as it's happening. Gratitude and thanksgiving is also a practice of mindfulness, one that we'll practice together today as we savor... yes, savor the gifts God has given us. Just as we savor the most delicious foods and beverages, we savor moments, relationships, and all of creation as we give thanks and praise to God. Come, let's enter into an attitude of gratitude as savor God's abundant gifts.

### Call to Worship | Psalm 100

Shout triumphantly to the Lord, all the earth!

**Serve the Lord with celebration!**

Come before him with shouts of joy!

**Know that the Lord is God—**

he made us; we belong to him.

**We are his people, the sheep of his own pasture.**

Enter his gates with thanks; enter his courtyards with praise!

Thank him! Bless his name! Because the Lord is good,

**his loyal love lasts forever; his faithfulness lasts generation after generation.**

### Opening Hymn | *Praise and Thanksgiving*

ELW 689

### Savoring What's Around Us: "The Beauty of the Earth"

Psalm 33:1-9, 20-22 | *Barb Stuart*

All you who are righteous, shout joyfully to the Lord! It's right for those who do right to praise God. Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre! Sing praises to him with the ten-stringed harp! Sing to him a new song! Play your best with joyful shouts! Because the Lord's word is right, his every act is done in good faith. He loves righteousness and justice; the Lord's faithful love fills the whole earth. The skies were made by the Lord's word, all their starry multitude by the breath of his mouth. He gathered the ocean waters into a heap; he put the deep seas into storerooms. All the earth honors the Lord; all the earth's inhabitants stand in awe of him. Because when he spoke, it happened! When he commanded, there it was!

We put our hope in the Lord. He is our help and our shield. Our heart rejoices in God because we trust his holy name. Lord, let your faithful love surround us because we wait for you.

### Reflection

Have you ever had that experience of looking up at the night sky and feeling so incredibly small, insignificant? I've had that feeling more than once in my life, but most recently when my family was on vacation up north in September. One chilly night, I noticed Tim wasn't sitting with the rest of us, so I went looking for him outside. He was laying by the shore of the lake, gazing up at the sky. We spent a good chunk of time that night marveling at the stars and their constellations, the planets and their brightness, the moon and its relative closeness to us. All this, God created.

A different day we went hiking in various state parks. The variety of vegetation in those parks was amazing, from the tallest tree to the smallest blade of grass. We tried to *really see* what we were walking through and in. Another part of God's wonderful creation. Much smaller than the stars and planets, but just as carefully and beautifully made. In these moments, we savored the beauty of what was around us, awe-inspired by God's creativity.

God is almighty, majestic, and all-powerful. At the same time, God is the God of everyday beauty, of little gifts of grace. God takes an interest in little things and little people—like us. God is attentive to each moment and to each person. God sees us, knows us, and provides for us.

### Prayer

“For the beauty of the earth, for the glory of the skies, for the love which from our birth over and around us lies. Christ, our Lord, to you we raise this, our hymn of grateful praise.”

For the rain, the harvest, the flowers, the mountains, the birds, the leaves; for paychecks, clothing, shelter, and tasty food, Lord, we say thank you. In Jesus' name.

**Amen.**

Hymn of Thanksgiving | *For the Beauty of the Earth* v.1 ELW 879

### **Savoring Moments: “The Wonder of Each Hour”**

Children's Sermon based on Luke 2:8-20

## Reflection

“Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.” Have you ever had an experience that was so profound, so meaningful or moving, that you just wanted to record it somehow so that it would never be forgotten—not only sound and video, but also smells and thoughts and emotions? Mary, the mother of Jesus, had one profound experience after another, from the angel’s visit, to the angel’s message that she was carrying the Son of God, to the birth of that child and the crew of shepherds that showed up. But she didn’t just think about these things. She *savored* them. She turned them every which way in her mind so as to be formed by them. This led to a profound sense of humility before God, and it led to gratitude.

The most wise and humble and grateful people I know are the ones who go through life with a sense of wonder and expectation, seeing evidence of our Creator God in the world around us. We could learn from them to savor each moment, to live our lives to the fullest, pondering these moments in our hearts.

## Prayer

“For the wonder of each hour of the day and of the night, . . . Christ, our Lord, to you we raise this, our hymn of grateful praise.”

We thank you for the experiences you’ve given us over the past year. Some have brought us joy. Some have opened our eyes to a new dimension of life. Some have been tough, but through them we have experienced your care— we learned something; we’ve grown. Some of these moments have quietly nurtured us; they’ve been like daily bread to us. Thank you, Lord, for all these moments—for being present with us, speaking, and providing each day. In Jesus’ name. **Amen.**

## Savoring Loved Ones: “The Joy of Human Love”

Ephesians 1:15–23 | *Wendy Claffey*

Since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, this is the reason that I don’t stop giving thanks to God for you when I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, will give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation that makes God known to you. I pray that the eyes of your heart will have enough light to see what is the hope of God’s call, what is the richness of God’s glorious inheritance among believers, and what is the overwhelming greatness of God’s power that is working among us believers. This power is conferred by the energy of God’s powerful strength. God’s power was at work in Christ when God raised him from the dead and sat him at God’s right side in the heavens, far above every

ruler and authority and power and angelic power, any power that might be named not only now but in the future. God put everything under Christ's feet and made him head of everything in the church, which is his body. His body, the church, is the fullness of Christ, who fills everything in every way.

### Reflection

Nearly every one of Paul's letters expresses thanksgiving, and always right near the top. That's a good pattern for us. Beginning our meals and meetings and weeks and worship with thanksgiving makes sense. All that we are and all that we have and all that we're able to do begins with God, the Creator and Sustainer of all things. Paul takes note of the Ephesians' faith, and he thanks God for them and for what he sees happening.

Just as Paul gives thanks for the communities he writes to, I give thanks for this community, for you. We may be a mostly homogenous congregation, but there is great diversity in our gifts. For each of these gifts, I give thanks. For the faith of each one of you, the faith that we share, I give thanks. As we approach Thanksgiving Day, let us, too, notice the gifts of those around us, and let's thank God for them.

### Prayer

"For the joy of human love, brother, sister, parent, child, friends on earth and friends above, for all gentle thoughts and mild, Christ, our Lord, to you we raise this, our hymn of grateful praise."

Lord, we thank you for each one mentioned, for your work in their lives, and for the blessing they've been to us. Thank you for each one in this church. Help us to see in each other your provision and your love. **Amen.**

Hymn of Thanksgiving | *For the Beauty of the Earth* v.4 ELW 879

### Savoring Christ: "Best Gift Divine"

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 | *Michelle or Emilyn Liebhard*

Everyone should give whatever they have decided in their heart. They shouldn't give with hesitation or because of pressure. God loves a cheerful giver. God has the power to provide you with more than enough of every kind of grace. That way, you will have everything you need always and in everything to provide more than enough for every kind of good work. As it is written, He scattered everywhere; he gave to the needy; his righteousness remains forever.

The one who supplies seed for planting and bread for eating will supply and multiply your seed and will increase your crop, which is righteousness. You will be made rich in

every way so that you can be generous in every way. Such generosity produces thanksgiving to God through us. Your ministry of this service to God's people isn't only fully meeting their needs but it is also multiplying in many expressions of thanksgiving to God. They will give honor to God for your obedience to your confession of Christ's gospel. They will do this because this service provides evidence of your obedience, and because of your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone. They will also pray for you, and they will care deeply for you because of the outstanding grace that God has given to you. Thank God for his gift that words can't describe!

### Reflection

Everything Paul says about giving flows out of one simple fact: the great generosity of our God. Just as we love because God first loved us, so we give because God first gave to us. And God gave us the most wonderful, indescribable gift: his Son.

Truth be told, we take for granted this gift from time to time. We don't always remember the full impact of the incarnation, of God taking on flesh. God, our God, who created the world around us, the moments that make up our lives, and the loved ones that we share it all with... all those things we savor and give thanks for, God created them all. And yet, God doesn't stop there... God gives us eternal life, life forever in God's presence, through Jesus Christ. And so, we savor and give thanks for Christ, for the one who conquered death once and for all. Who offers us forgiveness and grace. Thank God for this gift, that words cannot describe!

### Prayer

“For yourself, best gift divine, to the world so freely given, agent of God's grand design: peace on earth and joy in heaven. Christ, our Lord, to you we raise this, our hymn of grateful praise.”

Lord, we've thanked you for blessings in the world around us and for the richness of moments and experiences. We've thanked you for the blessing of people—all wonderful gifts. But we've reserved our most heartfelt gratitude for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. Words cannot fully express our thanks. We love you, Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn of Thanksgiving | *For the Beauty of the Earth* v. 5 ELW 879

A Practice in Thanks-Giving | Video

Final Blessing

Let thanksgiving enhance the joys you experience, let thanksgiving transcend the pains you may suffer, let thanksgiving sweeten the duties you must perform, let thanksgiving underpin even the griefs you may have to endure. Give thanks to our God who is so good, whose love stands firm forever.

The love of the Redeemer, + the love of the Creator, the fellowship of the Counsellor, will be with you now and always. **Amen!**

Closing Hymn | *Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow*

ELW 884

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**