



#### Monday

Genesis 48:8-12

<sup>8</sup> When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?" <sup>9</sup> Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." And he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them." <sup>10</sup> Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, and he could not see well. So Joseph brought them near him; and he kissed them and embraced them. <sup>11</sup> Israel said to Joseph, "I did not expect to see your face; and here God has let me see your children also." <sup>12</sup> Then Joseph removed them from his father's knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

In this poignant scene, Israel (Jacob's new name) meets with his son, Joseph, whom at one point he feared he would never see again. As it turned out, not only did Jacob see his son again, but he lived in Egypt near him for 17 years before he died. In this scene Jacob is meeting his grandsons for the first time and he rejoices in the fact that not only has he been able to see Joseph again, but even Joseph's children as well. His thankfulness to God is obvious. Perhaps you can relate with Jacob. Maybe you have endured a time in your life where you have lost someone or something so precious that you wondered if you would ever recover. Maybe you have endured a bankruptcy or a loss of a career you loved. Or maybe you have lost a spouse to cancer or a child to a car accident, or have lost a dear friend that was your main source of emotional support. Like Jacob, you were devastated with the loss and you grieved deeply. But then, to your surprise, God came to your aid. Doors opened to new possibilities. New relationships blossomed. New paths to explore presented themselves and one day, like Jacob, you find yourself saying, "I thought my life was over, but I have now received an abundance far beyond anything I could have imagined. I am renewed. Thanks be to God!"

#### Prayer

We thank you, Gracious God, for the ways that you renew our life. You bring us up out of our grief, our times of loss, and even from those places from which we thought we'd never recover. You are our strength and our song, and we praise you. Give us thankful hearts always, and fill us with faith in your power and love, so that, come what may, we might always be found in you. In Christ's name we pray. AMEN.

## Tuesday

I Chronicles 29:10-16

<sup>10</sup>Then David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly; David said: “Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever. <sup>11</sup>Yours, O LORD, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. <sup>12</sup>Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. <sup>13</sup>And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name. <sup>14</sup>“But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. <sup>15</sup>For we are aliens and transients before you, as were all our ancestors; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope. <sup>16</sup>O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.

This well-known song of praise comes from the lips of King David after he sees what the people of Israel have brought forward for the building of the great temple in Jerusalem. We are told earlier in the chapter that they brought forth gold and silver and bronze and iron and precious stones of all kinds – a huge sum. David too provided richly from his treasures for this wonderful project. Notice what David says, “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering?” And then he gets to the crux of it: *“For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.”* That is the thing we so easily forget. No matter how generous we are, finally everything we give was first given to us by God. Our life is a gift. Our abilities are gifts. Our minds and bodies and relationships and opportunities are gifts. Everything we have is finally something we have been given. This Thanksgiving season is a good time to ponder the gifts God has given us. Maybe a good exercise for all of us is to just start a list: write something down every day, something you have received from God. See how many days you go before you can’t think of anything to add to that list. It might surprise you.

## Prayer

All things come to us from your hand, Generous God. Thanks and praise to you. Our very breath is a gift from you. Thank you. Our body and mind, our spirit, and all of our abilities are gifts from you. Thank you. Grant us a deep sense of gratitude, O God, and free us to live generously with all that we have. We ask this in your Holy Name. AMEN.

## **Wednesday**

Psalm 92:1-4

<sup>1</sup> It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; <sup>2</sup> to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, <sup>3</sup> to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. <sup>4</sup> For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.

The psalmist says it simply, “It is good to give thanks to the Lord.” Living thankfully is good. Not only is this true, but it is true in many ways. Studies have shown over and over that thankful people, people who live generously and give themselves to friends and neighbors in meaningful ways, are healthier and happier. One study found that people who volunteer in their retirement live over twice as long as those who don’t. We are wired to live thankfully and generously; that’s what these studies show. These days, as we live through this pandemic time, it is tempting to think that what is best is for us to isolate ourselves lest we catch the virus. Certainly this is true to an extent. We should not be taking risks unnecessarily. But we can still reach out to people. Maybe writing a card or making a phone call to a neighbor or friend or distant relative might be just what they need. Maybe we could make a special gift to our church or favorite charity in honor of someone’s birthday, or in memory of a loved one. Maybe we could bake a treat for a neighbor and put a nice card with it and leave it at their doorstep. It is good to live thankfully. As the psalmist says, “You, O Lord, have made me glad by your work,” and we, in turn, can make others glad too.

## **Prayer**

Thank you, Gracious God, for giving us life. Thank you for giving us the ability to reach out and touch others. Thank you for reaching out and touching us in the life and words of Jesus. Grant that we might be so filled with gratitude that we would live our lives thankfully and generously every day. In your Son’s Name, we pray. AMEN.

## Thursday

Luke 17:11-19

<sup>11</sup> On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup> As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, <sup>13</sup> they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” <sup>14</sup> When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean. <sup>15</sup> Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. <sup>16</sup> He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup> Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?” <sup>18</sup> Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” <sup>19</sup> Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

This well-known story is often read at Thanksgiving Day worship. It isn’t the greatest story regarding thankfulness, since only one of the ten lepers remembers to come back to thank Jesus for the healing they have received. Before we get too hard on the nine who fail to return, it’s good to remember how easy this is to do. How many times have you prayed for something and then, when you have received what you prayed for, you got so excited about it, you completely forgot to thank God? That experience is common to us all. What Jesus reveals in this story is that thankfulness is an aspect of faith. When we are cognizant of the fact that all things come from God – faith – then it is that we are most likely to remember to say thank you. If, on the other hand, we forget, and we attribute our good fortune to good luck, perfect timing, or our own resourcefulness, we are then most apt to forget the God who provides all things in abundance. This story of the ten lepers may, of course, have another ending which was not written down. Maybe the one thankful leper found the others in town and reminded them that Jesus was the one who healed them, and maybe after being reminded of this, they all returned and gave thanks. Let’s hope so.

## Prayer

Remind us every day, Lord, that you are the fountain of life. You are the one who gives healing and hope. You are the one who raises up those who are cast down, comforts those who grieve, and feeds those who are hungry for renewal. Give us eyes to see you at work in our lives, and hearts that are overflowing with gratitude every day. In the name of Jesus, we pray. AMEN.

## Friday

II Corinthians 9:10-15

<sup>10</sup> He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.<sup>11</sup> You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; <sup>12</sup> for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. <sup>13</sup> Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, <sup>14</sup> while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. <sup>15</sup> Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

In this passage, the Apostle Paul is giving thanks to the Corinthians for their generosity in providing for those starving in Jerusalem. During his missionary journeys he has been collecting funds for the members of the church in Jerusalem who are enduring famine, and the response from the people in Corinth has been overwhelming. But notice how the gifts of the Corinthians ripple out in ways that even they could not have anticipated: “For the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints [who are starving in Jerusalem], but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.” The fact is, the gifts the Corinthians gave not only fed the people physically, it also gave them *spiritual* strength to know that they weren’t alone; their siblings in Christ in the Gentile world cared about them! This is what happens whenever we give gifts to those in need. Not only are people fed and clothed and given clean water to drink, and given medicine and bandages for their wounds, but their starving and parched souls are also fed. Their wounded hearts are bound up by our gifts, because they know they are not alone; their prayers have been heard. Whenever we receive gifts we experience this too. When the neighbor drops by with a sympathy card, when the little girl next door bakes a dozen cookies and brings them to our door, when the person at work emails us to say that he is praying for us in our loss, all of these things overflow in us as we give thanks. It turns out that nothing overflows like thankfulness.

## Prayer

God of all Life and Goodness, we give you thanks in this Thanksgiving week for all your goodness to us. We thank you chiefly for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, whose life, death and resurrection have given us new life. We thank you that your Spirit continues to work in us, renewing us every day. By your grace, open us every day to your goodness, and let our experience of your grace extend through us to all we meet. In the Name of Christ, we pray. AMEN.