

November 24, 2019



**Giving Thanks:
Living Life More Abundantly**

Ancient Reading

~ *Malachi 3:10-12*

Bring the entire tithe, the whole tenth of your bounty, into the storehouse that there may be food in my house! Prove me now in this, says YHWH, and see if I do not open the windows of heaven and pour so much blessing out that you cannot contain it! I will keep pests from destroying the produce of your soil, and prevent your vines from dropping fruit before the time in the field, says YHWH. All nations will call you happy, for yours will be a land of delight.

Second Reading

~ *Luke 6:37-38*

Don't judge, and you won't be judged. Don't condemn, and you won't be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given unto you: a full measure, packed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured out into your lap. For the amount you measure out, is the amount you will be given back.

Third Reading

~ *adapted from Rachel Held Evans "Searching for Sunday"*

A writer friend of mine recently sent me a bouquet of orchids that sat on our dining room table for weeks in a perpetual explosion of magenta. She sent them because she knew I was in one of those seasons when I wanted little to do with God and nothing to do with the church. Christians had been cruel to one another and cruel to me, and it had all happened in a public forum. I was in no mood to accept any acts of mercy, particularly from the very sort of Christians against

whom I was revolting. Embarrassed by her generosity, I sent a quick thank-you in response and resolved to return the favor sometime. If I owed her, maybe I wouldn't have to let her in. I was in possession of my friend's gift long before I received it, on a gray day when its stubborn, irresponsible beauty could no longer be ignored. Until then, I didn't want to admit how badly I needed her kindness, how helpless I was at sorting all this out on my own. I didn't want to see myself in those fragile, thirsty orchids, fighting against the gloom to trestle toward the light. But this friend knows better than most the nature of eucharisteo—thanksgiving—how it enters through our soft spots and seeps in through our cracks. She knew God would unclench my fists and unfurl my fingers and... And so it did, when I finally opened my hands, when I received grace the way I receive communion, with nothing to offer back... but thanks.

Fourth Reading

~ adapted from "The Collected Sermons of Fred Craddock"

During the Vietnam War I was asked to have a preaching workshop for chaplains up at Fort Belvoir in Virginia. In the evening I ate with the commissioned officers, lieutenants and captains. I think there was a lieutenant colonel there. Had a nice Thanksgiving meal. Our table was waited upon by a young man in army green. I looked at him several times. I nodded my gratitude to him but he never said anything. I looked at his shirt pocket to see his name. I was going to call him by name but it didn't have his name. So I just said to him, "Well, I would thank you, whatever your name is; I don't see a name." He never said a word. The officer next to me said, "He doesn't have a name. We have several conscientious objectors that work here, that wait tables, clean the toilets, and anything else we don't want to do, they do. But they have no names. They're conscientious objectors." It is difficult in a world like ours to be thankful when you don't know who to thank.