

October, 2021

Dear St Andrew's Family,

Happy Thanksgiving! It is that time of the year when we set aside a day to be intentional in giving thanks.

This last little while has felt like a rollercoaster ride. I don't know about you, but I have felt even more stress recently with rising cases of Covid, the ever fluctuating regulations, the growing division between friends and family because of different viewpoints, the slowing rate of vaccination and the challenge of balancing being a Church that welcomes EVERYONE with our responsibility to protect the most vulnerable ones in our midst.



In the middle of this stressful, divisive, challenging time comes Thanksgiving Day. On the one hand, it might be the last thing we want, but on the other hand, it is exactly what we need. In our sacred stories, the Scriptures, many people searched out Jesus because they are at their lowest. They were outcasts needing community, they were oppressed and searching for freedom, they were lost and needing to be found. Jesus was the hope they found in midst of their darkest times. Jesus was a light in the darkness. We hear the stories of people whose lives were completely transformed, but sometimes I think about the other people Jesus met. I think about the crowds who gathered to hear him at the sermon on the mount. I imagine what it was like for the 5000 (and later the 4000) who gathered to listen to what Jesus had to say and while there experienced the miracle that Jesus was able to feed them all! I think of those folks oppressed by the Romans who gathered on "Palm Sunday" just to catch a glimpse of him as he rode a donkey into Jerusalem. What was it like for them? Maybe they felt this spark of joy. Perhaps they were filled with warmth, comfort, peace. Maybe for some, although the feeling was fleeting because they had to return to the challenges of their lives, there were moments when they could re-live that feeling - especially when things got tough.

When I lived in Bolivia, I learned so much from the people I built relationships with. They lived in poverty. Accessing even basic human rights was a struggle, yet, they knew how to celebrate. People lived in the moment, momentarily letting go of their troubles... and partied!

This Thanksgiving, I invite you to be like those folks pushing their way through a crowd to just catch a glimpse of this person, Jesus; or the Bolivians who let go of all of their struggles to rejoice. Let's take this day and celebrate. **Celebrate all that is awesome in this world.** Give thanks for all the good that has happened in these pandemic times, all the skills we have learned, all the medical advances, all the caring shown between people. Let's take this day and celebrate that restrictions are loosening, that there is an end in sight, and that hugs and large family dinners, church services and going to a concert or out to eat are all starting to be possible. Let's take this day and remember not to take the little things in life for granted.

Thank you God, that even from the hardest of times, amazing things can emerge. We give our thanks.

*Blessings,  
Rev. Shannon*

