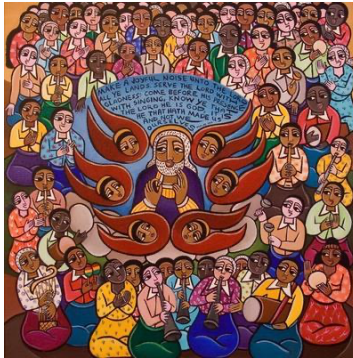


Thanksgiving Message

Rev. Ann Eichhorn

November 20, 2022



Psalm 100, 2004

Laura James

Readings

Psalm 100

Revised Standard Bible (1952)

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the lands! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the Lord is God! It is he that made us, and we are his, we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with Thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him, bless his name! For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures for ever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 100

Eugene Peterson in *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language, 2022 edition*

(Gender changes made by Ann Eichhorn*)

On your feet now – applaud God! Bring a gift of laughter, sing yourselves into [God’s] presence. Know this God is God, and [God] made us, we didn’t make [God]. We’re God’s people, God’s well-tended sheep. Enter with the password: “Thank you!” Make yourselves at home, talking praise. Thank [God]. Worship [God]. For God is sheer beauty, all generous in love, loyal always and ever.

* * * *

** Please note, this is really the third version [of today’s reading], as I have also revised and updated Peterson’s interpretation where God is in brackets, by removing the sexist identifier of God as ... “Him,” and replacing it as the genderless “God,” for possible clearer understanding today.*

Seeing and reading these versions, do you see why it is necessary in each age to review and revise the ancient texts in order for them to make any sense or provide doorways to wisdom that might assist us in addressing the present times? ~ Ann

This psalm is actually an invitation to the people of God, then and now, to enter into the living room where God is always present to us and to have a conversation with God. This text calls us to acknowledge the presence of a higher power in our lives, and to live as though we are connected and nourished by this *good thing*, as one of my ministerial colleagues used to name God. This psalm invites us to what Walter Brueggemann (my favorite Old Testament professor at seminary) called “living the Covenantal conversation,” being at home with a way of life linked not only to God, but to the Biblical mother tongue of praise, confession, lament, gratitude, despair, grace and gratefulness. Every day that he stepped into a classroom or onto a speaker stage, Walter would attempt to center everyone by helping them acknowledge the truth-telling voice in their minds as a way of loving God and invoking God’s guidance. He would then proceed to find an appropriate teaching moment he called the presence of the Spirit as a daily exercise in faith and praise. He modeled for many of us for the first time an interactive relationship with God, available to each of us on a regular basis.

In the Stone Soup gathering this week, Rogers reminded us that the high cathedral ceilings and tall steeples of Christian places of worship point upward towards the heavens where we were taught God dwells. As scholars have continued to study the ancient cultures referenced in the Bible, we have learned that there were other interpretations of where God is and how one can tune in to a private conversation with God. Hence today we understand that God is present *with* us, that we are not alone.

While still a student learning new religious and spiritual concepts and understandings, with Walter’s help back then, I began the practice of being in some kind of mental conversation with God in my head nearly every day. My conversations may consist of a quick “thank you” for getting me through a difficult experience, or they may be a prayer for guidance in finding the right words to use in a perplexing situation, or how best to proceed or respond in such a situation. My mental conversation might include a prayer petition for myself or someone else, or in relation to a state of global affairs.

I think this is the psalmist’s invitation: to know that God is already in the room and is willing to listen and to talk with us. I’ve been a little surprised at the answers I’ve been getting this week when I’ve asked the questions: *Do you have a conversation with God in your head on a regular basis? Do you occasionally find ways to applaud God, to share your joy? Do you feel some kind of protection or tending coming from God? What’s the nature of your interaction with God?*

Today, my beloved friends, is a day on which we gather together for the communion of a traditional meal of Thanksgiving. Many of us are able to be here in person, and some of you are farther away and are joining us via Zoom. It’s a day on which we can honor and remember those who have left us and give thanks that they were in our lives. It’s a day of rejoicing over the timely good news of an unexpectedly large amount of money that’s been gifted to CCC by the Palmer family – Peter, Melba and Melody – that will more than see us through some of the financial deficits we were facing in the year ahead, due primarily to the deaths of so many of our congregation in the past five years and the effects of the pandemic still to be dealt with. This gift in the midst of a time of transition will fuel our imaginations as to how best to carry out the mission of this community – a people of God, looking to the future.

I chose the readings today to intentionally ready us for laughter, relief, and excitement, as we not only celebrate the gift, but as we also begin to venture “out into the world again.” My hope is that we can do that with something other than dread and fear over what the world has become, and instead welcome the people and opportunities we encounter with fresh ideas based on love, justice, equality, and grace.

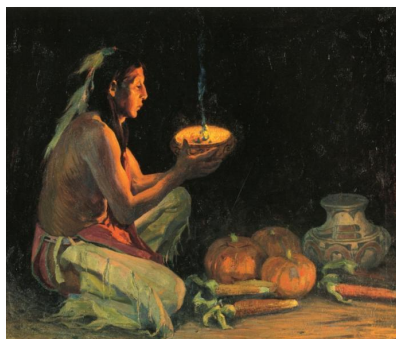
The Stewardship Team is calling on us to support the CCC budget that funds our ongoing life and includes programs and projects we help support in our wider community. We do this by also using our unique gifts of “time, talent and treasure.” You all know that this church is filled with talented people, experienced and skilled. Creative ideas and expressions pop up frequently, and they stir other thoughts, emotions, and actions. If you consider the number of people who signed up to assist in some way with the service and meal planning for today – shopping, preparing food, cooking, setting up and decorating, serving, cleaning up – you’ll find that an awesome amount of time was collectively given to making this day a success. Our individual pledges, plate donations, equipment purchases, etc., represent some of the treasures that keep the church alive. We may be small, and we may be lacking a generation or two (some church renewal commentators would refer to our congregation as “wrinkling and shrinking,” using the word “Shrinklinking” to describe us), but whatever we are, we can rejoice, we can applaud ourselves, and we are *still here*. We can continue to nurture and challenge each other as we seek ways to deepen relationships in love around us. It is indeed a time to rejoice and give thanks; we are still engaged in building community here. I’ll end this part of the service with the David Whyte’s words in his book *Consolations* about gratitude which we included in the Friday communication.

Gratitude ... arises from paying attention, from being awake in the presence of everything that lives within and without us....Thankfulness finds its full measure in generosity of presence, both through participation and witness. We sit at the table as part of every other person’s world while making our own world without will or effort, this is what is extraordinary and gifted, this is the essence of gratefulness.... Thanksgiving happens when our sense of presence meets all other presences. ...

Finally, a quote from Meister Eckhart:

*And suddenly you know:
It’s time to start something new and trust the magic of new beginnings.*

Happy Thanksgiving!



Thanksgiving Ceremony
E. Irving Couse