

THANKSGIVING SERMON  
2012

Listen – I'm going to tell you a secret.  
It's about the order of things.....  
If I showed you these words....and asked you to put them in order,  
how would you do that?

HAPPY  
THANKS  
GIVING

Some people would say that it goes like this:  
First, you have something to be happy about  
which makes you give thanks  
and then you give, in response.

How do you feel about that?

Well, this is the secret. This is the Gospel.  
This is how life works:

When you begin with thanks,  
it causes you to give  
and you end up happy.

AND

When you give first – even if you don't particularly feel like it  
you end up thankful  
and happy

THAT'S THE REAL ORDER OF THINGS.  
The order of the words  
and the order of the world.

It's part of our make up – part of our creation as human beings  
that some of the things that make us feel the best  
are when we give and make someone else happy. Our own happiness flows from that, and I dare say,  
DEPENDS on that.

There's nothing like that feeling, having helped, having made a difference – not in some superior  
“noblesse oblige” kind of way but honestly humbly, reached out a hand in whatever way we can, to  
help someone else.  
That's a wonderful feeling. And this is the real secret...

that feeling?  
That thrill of giving?  
That is none other than the image of God in us.

The scriptures tell us that we are made in the image of God.  
What does this mean?  
That God looks like us?  
No! It's something deeper, more glorious than that.

God is the force, the spirit, the drive, and the passion for giving life and love built into the fabric of the universe.

It's at every level. Cells and atoms, galaxies and solar systems  
and the human heart.

We are made for love  
we are made for each other  
and when we give, when we reach out to one another and when we face life  
whatever it holds for us at any given moment  
when we face it with gratitude  
the image of God shines in us and out of us  
and there's a happiness that words can't describe and the pain of the world cannot destroy.

Does this mean we're never sad?  
That we never despair?  
Absolutely not.

But it does mean that the best, most solid and healthy way to live with the pain that we can, and do,  
experience,  
the best way to face it, is with an attitude of gratitude  
and with heart and hands open to give others the happiness that we may not be feeling right now.

Give something to someone – make a difference in someone's life...(what's that old song...make  
someone happy....).

there is opportunity upon opportunity to do that.

And  
the feeling you have is a clue to the very nature of God.

It does not happen right away.  
It's like table and tables.

In a few minutes we'll come to this table to be fed and sustained. Does this work in some magic way?  
No. This table, like the tables you learned in arithmetic need to be practised over and over and over.  
Remember learning your times tables? Until you know them how? By heart.

It's like that with this table too.

You come here and come again  
until you know BY HEART the truth that the gifts of God are for the people of God and that includes  
everyone in the world and most certainly includes you.  
That takes practice of the spirit.

Table and tables require practice.  
Being a person of gratitude requires practice  
facing the world with thanks first  
requires practice

God is a God of lavish, extravagant, unconditional giving. God gives, and gives, and gives.  
And  
the One we follow and by whom we are named  
gave the ultimate gift – poured himself out – emptied himself – gift beyond compare  
God's nature is to give  
and your nature – the God-given divine image in you  
yearns to give  
is hard-wired for thanks and praise  
and when we live with thanks,  
and the giving is practised and natural and real  
you take your own place in the order of things  
and the happiness is overflowing  
HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!!!