

Faith Matters # 4 – “Thanksgiving” – Feb. 26

Beginning in 1937 for about 15 years, New Westminster Church by Scott Park was my home church. For many, if not most Sundays, the service of worship began with verses from Psalm 100: “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands... Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.”

That was the Call to Worship I grew up with: “Enter his gates with thanksgiving, be thankful unto him.” We were being trained that church worship involves gratitude. Sadly and unconsciously, I believed that thanks to God is something that is done in his courts, in church, by the minister, the professional pray-er.

Outside the church, in the world of commerce and business, we were being trained differently, to be dissatisfied with our possessions and our appearance. Advertising never teaches us to be thankful for what we have or grateful for how we look. That would be bad for business.

But after listening to years of sermons, I learned from the Apostle Paul that thanksgiving is essential to being a follower of Jesus Christ. In his letter to the new Christians in Colossae he writes, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.... And be thankful (3:15); Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert with thanksgiving” (4:2). How odd – “keeping alert with thanksgiving!”

Invitations to be thankful and examples of thanksgiving occur hundreds of times throughout the Bible. You encounter it in the first verse of the 10 commandments: “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” So the Hebrews were to obey those commandments not because they were the law, but because of what God had done for them. God rescues; so here’s how to show your gratitude. At the cross, and the empty tomb, God has rescued us.

When you take time to consider what we can be grateful for, the list is endless – beginning with this heartbeat, and now this heartbeat, clean water, friends, muscles that work, minds that remember. It will take an eternity to complete the list of all we can be thankful for.

So as you devote yourself to prayer, keep alert with thanksgiving. Besides, it helps to create communities of gratitude.

(by Rev. Willard Pottinger – Erskine Presbyterian Church, Hamilton)