



the Source

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...

We are entering a time of commitment with our pledges to the church. Unfortunately, we have become almost immune to these annual events. Let's take a bit of time to reconsider.

Last Sunday we observed Veterans Day. What a time to think about commitment! We expressed our gratitude to our service members, whose commitments required giving up some years of their lifetime to protect our country – and sadly too many have also given their lives for that cause. When we think of commitment, this is a place to start.

Today's scripture also involves a prophetic commitment to God. Elijah is *on the run* after Jezebel has placed a price on him for defeating and destroying the prophets of her Baals. Now in the wilderness, he encounters a widow with only enough meal and oil for one last small meal for her son and herself, and Elijah asks her to give up even that. I feel sure the poor widow thought it really didn't make that much difference, they would all starve just that much sooner. And yet, as God honored that gift, they all had enough to survive until safety returned.

Now this week we come to Thanksgiving...a season to reflect on all we have been provided over the past year(s). We realize all the ways we have received what we need and more, and we are encouraged to give thanks...to give specific thanks to the people who have been part of our lives, and to God for everything for which we cannot claim any responsibility.

Our model Thanksgiving in America was a response to the Pilgrims' survival for a full year. Crops had grown well enough that there was food to get them through the coming winter and the natives had been reasonably helpful. The survivors took a few days to celebrate and thank God for all that.

Now it's our turn. The church, as a voluntary entity these days, does not call for our exclusive commitment (though God might!) Our challenge is to understand Christ's place among all the competing idols of our society, and to support it appropriately. Traditionally, we thought of giving as a *tithe*, a tenth of our resources. We recognize that our resources today are time and talents as well as wealth, and we can commit ourselves from them as well. We are invited to recommit our lives to God through Christ's church.

— Dr. John Clifford, Retired Clergy-in-Residence

A Family Affair

We are celebrating a special holiday this week...Thanksgiving! Read and discuss Psalm 100:4-5. Verse 4 tells us we should be thankful to God. What specific reasons does this Psalm give us for being grateful to God? Now read Thessalonians 5:18. The writer challenges us to be thankful in all circumstances, not just when we are happy or when things go our way. A grateful heart is an attitude, a way of living. Sometimes thinking of specific reasons to be grateful can help us to be grateful in all circumstances.

Each day leading up to Thanksgiving, have each family member write down one thing they are thankful for and place it in a basket, or other container. Rather than simply naming an item, like *family*, share a specific reason you are thankful for your family. For example, "I am thankful for my family's support at my soccer games." On Thursday, family members can take turns drawing one item from the basket. Read them aloud to each other during Thanksgiving dinner to share your ideas on gratitude.

Dear God, Thank you for this week that we can focus on gratitude. We know we have many reasons to be thankful. Please help us to remember to find a reason to be thankful, even when things are challenging. In Jesus' name, Amen.

— Jennifer Hall, Director of Children's Ministry

Monday: I Kings 17:7-16

This week's scripture hints at the source of our commitments...connections! Elijah has had a connection with God which has led him to this place. Now he engages in another one with the widow and her son. The things to which we feel somehow connected are the things to which we will make commitments.

- What are your connections with First UMC? With your neighbors? With friends?

Tuesday: Genesis 1 (1:26-31)

The beginning of our faith story is the recognition that we are connected to all of creation, since we all have the same origins in God. While humans are considered the crown of that creation, and are given dominion (properly, "stewardship") of it, we are still part of a web of connections.

- How often do we try to sever those connections by claiming credit for the natural resources of our world?

Wednesday: Revelation 7:9-12

In the midst of Revelations' catalog of tribulations there is a recurring refrain: at the throne of God, worship and praise continue unabated.

- Are we more likely to neglect to worship when life is easy?
- On the eve of Thanksgiving Day, will we choose to worship God for all we have received?

Thursday: Thanksgiving Day – Psalm 8, Psalm 95:1-7

Built on a long tradition of acknowledging that we are dependent – on one another, and on God's creation in which we live – we take a day off to "give thanks."

- During the day, perhaps while we are at the festival table, take time to share aloud some of the things in your world for which you are grateful.

Friday: Mark 10:17-22

As commitment cards are considered, and filled out, and collected, recall Jesus' encounter with the rich young ruler, His invitation to "follow me", and His sorrow over the man's departure. What a commentary on our consumer-driven world!

- What are the things which are most important to you?
- What sort of commitment have you made to following Jesus?
- How is the church part of that commitment?

