

A Careful Thanksgiving

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From Christian Scripture:

We urge you, sisters and brothers, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.

- 1 Thessalonians 5: 14-19

Sermon :

The Christian mystic Meister Eckhart is reputed to have said:

"If the only prayer you ever say is *Thank you*, it will suffice.

I agree.

But, in a culture built on consumption and surrounded by commercials which begin with the words...

You deserve it...

Or, you deserve the best...

Which, in some way, reflect something of the underlying values inherent in the culture around us, and which tells us over and over again that good is not good enough and that if you only have what you have you are missing out...

The words *Thank you*.

And an attitude of gratitude.

Is counter cultural.

And, while I am far from being a spiritual guru of any kind, I am convinced that if you want to deepen your faith or to grow spiritually a good place to start would be to turn in the direction of Meister Eckhart's wisdom and to say or to pray using those two simple words: *Thank you*.

But, with that said, now this.

Be careful about your thanks giving.

Or, maybe more accurately, be thoughtful.

In the last couple of weeks since Superstorm Sandy slammed into our lives I have been thinking a lot about what it means to be thankful and the types of things for which I am thankful and what this Thanksgiving will be like for so many.

How often, I have asked myself, is my *thank you* about things? About...

Food enough.

A safe place to call home.

Access to resources which many, even most, cannot imagine.

Light.

Heat.

A hot shower.

Certainly all these luxuries...

And, I do mean luxuries...

Deserve my being thankful and not taking any of them for granted.

But, this is what is different for me this time around...
If our gratitude is only about or primarily about things...

The food we have to eat.
The car we are able to drive.
The house in which we live.
The clothes we have to wear.

What would happen if those things were suddenly taken away?
Would my gratitude evaporate?
Would my faith dry up?
Would God disappear?

I would like to think it wouldn't. At least I hope it wouldn't.

But, to tell you the truth I don't know for sure.

You and I have both seen and heard and experienced situations and circumstances where, for some, it did. Where bitterness and resentment and "Why me?" and "Why not me?" became the framework for some their lives.

So, back to today and for my preparations for this Thanksgiving....

This Thanksgiving I will be grateful.

Grateful that I will have the opportunity to share a meal with a family I love and who love me.

Grateful for the banquet of food which we will enjoy together.

Grateful for safety and freedom and power and heat.

But, I will also ponder these few words from sacred text written down out of a wisdom I doubt I will ever achieve, but wisdom and insight never the less...

In all things give thanks.

In all things...

All things...

All things...

Give thanks.

So, this Thanksgiving, in addition to everything else for which I am grateful,
I will try to make sense of those words.