

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” Galatians 6:22-24.

Dear Christian friends,

Thanksgiving is designated to be celebrated this month. It predominantly is a harvest festival which began among a people who were very close to the source of their food – the garden, the orchard and the field. They tilled and sowed seed. They tended flocks and herds. They dealt with drought, flood, pestilence and disease acting against flora and fauna. They reaped, harvested, butchered, and preserved as food provisions for the coming winter. Ultimately, they knew that without the Creator’s blessing all would be for naught. Autumn was the culmination of the most fruitful part of the annual growing season.

These past weeks have been pure joy for home gardeners. The vegetables and fruit which we can pick from our gardens are delightful. When the produce we use can be vine-ripened, the flavor is divine. When one compares a vine-ripened product with one commercially available the taste is incomparable. I have been indulging in the tomatoes from my backyard. They are filled with flavor. They are juice laden. They are delicious! Most people who have experienced these two types of products would agree. Nothing out does the fully-aged, vine-ripened fruit or vegetable.

Those tomatoes I am enjoying didn’t mystically appear in my yard. There were challenges to getting a harvest. I had to fight against varmints like squirrels, crows, and slugs. I had to be certain to apply fertilizer and minerals for good healthy growth. I had to be vigilant against disease. I had to water the plants in the hot, dry days of summer. I had to protect them from severe wind and hail. I delighted in the bees that flitted from blossom to blossom. I marveled at the growth of the fertile bud up to the brilliant full-shaped fruit. Yes, there was caretaking done in my garden, but the harvest is bountiful.

The slogan on the Church sign these past weeks has been a summary of God’s active holy presence among the baptized. That slogan reads, “Grow and bloom in God’s grace; bear holy fruit.” It exemplifies the Christian adage – “All that I am and all that I have is a gift from God.” This quote is a reminder that God is sovereign and we are merely the caretakers of the world and our environment. It is appropriate that we give thanks to God for all the goodness we receive.

We will celebrate Thanksgiving again with a fullness of thanks. We can turn to God through worship, prayer and devotion to acknowledge the truth of our bounty. Without God’s favor upon the plants, soil, and growing season our granaries would be empty.

The thing we can be most thankful for is the steadfast love and constant mercy God bestows upon us. Christ Jesus is the source of our freedom and life. God’s Holy Spirit is our constant companion and nurturer throughout our life. God acts like a gardener in our lives also. He provides resources for our continual growing, blossoming and fruit-bearing through scriptures, worship, communion, and fellowship. God watches for disease, prunes brokenness, and delights in the intricacy of interdependence. God gives growth in our lives – growth that is fully fruit-bearing.

This Autumn, imbibe the fullness of God’s presence to us. Let the fruit of the Holy Spirit come to full maturity among us. Live the cruciform life with Christ Jesus.

In Christ forever,
Pastor Kevin.