

First United Methodist Church

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Here we are in the season of Thankfulness. Thanksgiving was yesterday, and I hope everyone had a great day filled with the three "F's"; food, family, and football. OK, well at least I hope the first two were a part of your day! 😊 I also hope there was a bit of quiet reflection in your day – a point of reflecting on the many blessings of your life.

Now when we think of the blessings of our lives, we tend to think of the good things...the positive things that we have or that we've experienced on this journey. Or at least that tends to be the way I think. Yet, just a couple weeks ago I read a statement that has me thinking in a slightly different way this year. The statement is a quote from Henry Nouwen, a 20th century Theologian. He wrote,

"To be grateful for the good things that happen in our lives is easy, but to be grateful for all of our lives-the good as well as the bad, the moments of joy as well as the moments of sorrow, the successes as well as the failures, the rewards as well as the rejections.....that requires hard spiritual work."

Being grateful for the good as well as the bad, the joy and the sorrow, the successes and the failures... Can I truly say that I'm grateful for the difficult moments that have come along in my life?? When I first started thinking about "those" moments in my life, there were several very painful and difficult times that came to mind. Yet, the more I thought about these challenging moments I was able to see that each of them helped shape me for the better.

Just to be clear I wasn't able to see the positive when I was in the middle of the struggle and pain of the situations. But with the perspective of time and hindsight I was able to see how those moments helped me become a better person and/or helped better prepare me to deal with similar situations in my future. As my dad always said, he learned best at the school of hard knocks. Sometimes I think that describes me well too.

So, today as I continue to reflect on the "blessings" of my life, I am grateful for you my church family. We've had quite a year together. We have accomplished some really incredible things! We have seen God break through in some amazing ways! We have worked together to do ministry here in Mitchell and the world! Have there been challenges along the way? Yes, there have. But we've persevered, we've grown through it all, and we've come out on top.

I can also look back on my life and see how the challenges of the past have better prepared me for ministry and life today. So, I am grateful for those moments too. The closing line of the Henry Nouwen quote is also quite powerful and fitting. ***"Let's not be afraid to look at everything that has brought us to where we are now and trust that we will soon see in it the guiding hand of a loving God."*** Yes, the hand of God is at work and is guiding each of our lives. This is truly something to give thanks for.

Serving Together,
Pastor Keith