

Greenfield Hill Congregational Church

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Date: June 14, 2020
Sermon: Thank-You Sunday!
Scripture: Scripture Litany
Pastor: Rev. David Johnson Rowe

Litany *The Church: the Body of Christ* from 1st Corinthians 12

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.

If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body.

And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body.

If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be?

If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

You are the body of Christ!

Gratitude. You can't worship without it. You can't do Church without it.

"Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before God, our maker."

"Enter his gates with Thanksgiving."

"Give thanks to God."

"Give thanks in all circumstances."

"Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

All Bible verses. Thanks, thanks, and more thanks.

The easiest, most fun holiday of the year is Thanksgiving; the easiest, most fun sermons to preach are about Thanksgiving, gratitude, being grateful. There is something essentially human and spiritual about gratitude. It comes from a good place—your heart. It goes to a good place—to someone outside yourself.

Jesus himself expressed gratitude; he admired it in others; he was disappointed when folks neglected it; and he mocked it when it wasn't real.

The Psalms thank God for every little thing, every big thing, and every good thing. And truth is religion gets its start in the Bible with gratitude. From humanity's earliest days, people found ways to express "thanks" to God for crops, for help, for life.

Do you remember the tragic Bible story of two brothers, Cain and Abel? One was grateful. One was ungrateful, and the ungrateful one killed the grateful one. From the dawn of civilization, there's been tension between gratitude and selfishness.

Now, I know these last four months have been various forms of terrible: economic shutdown, personal isolation, plans up-ended; sickness and death all around; and now the nationwide struggle for justice against racism, wrestling with inner demons that have plagued us like the virus itself. We haven't sugarcoated any of that. If you look back over these last 14 weeks of sermons and Bible studies, we have dealt with the pandemic's sorrows, lessons, and losses; we've faced the call, yearning, and rage for justice.

But along the way, our little Church has been bursting with gratitude. To summarize: many, many of you have given us a lot of money to use local food places to buy their food, to help a lot of people really stressed and stretched by the shutdown. Families with Covid. People who can't get out. Ministries among the needy, shut down and shut in, small businesses, food pantries. Add to that, some 25 bakers and cooks who have made "delicious" the middle name of our Church, and another 20 people who have shopped and ferried and delivered. One gigantic food chain from the first dollar given to the last dinner delivered. And all along the way, every inch of the way, every single day filled with gratitude. *Gratitude.*

We have received so many thank-you notes, old-fashioned thank-you notes, handwritten, personal, thoughtful. We've pulled into places to help, and the people cheer and clap and weep. Our bakers, cooks, and deliverers thank us for the chance to bake, cook, and deliver.

The prayers for healing from sickness will go on. The work for justice against racism will go on. The hope for reopening the economy will go on. And we'll be there in the middle of it all with grateful hearts. Because gratitude sustains everything else we do. We do "give thanks in all circumstances."

Our first hymn is a hymn of praise, a hymn of gratitude,
"All Creatures of Our God and King."

*All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing
Alleluia, Alleluia!*

*O burning sun with golden beam,
O silver moon with softer gleam:*

Refrain

*O praise God, O praise God,
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!*

*O rushing wind with voice so strong,
you clouds that sail in heav'n along,
O praise God, Alleluia!*

*O rising morn, in praise rejoice,
you lights of evening find a voice:*

Refrain

*O flowing water, pure and clear,
make music for your God to hear,
Alleluia, Alleluia!*

*O blazing fire who lights the night,
providing warmth, enhancing sight,*

Refrain

*And all forgiven tender hearts,
forgiving others, take your part,
sing praises, alleluia!
You who long pain and sorrow bear,
praise God, who knows your ev'ry care.*

Refrain