

For the Journey

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“Give thanks with a grateful heart, give thanks to the Holy One, give thanks because He’s given Jesus Christ, His Son (Repeat). And now let the weak say, ‘I am strong’; let the poor say, ‘I am rich’, because of what the Lord has done for us (Repeat). Give thanks!”
(Words and music: Henry Smith)

This wonderful, upbeat praise song from my past fits well with Thanksgiving. In a previous congregation we sang it every week as the Sunday gifts and offerings were brought forward for dedication. One of the stalwart families of that church, a sports-oriented family with 5 boys and 1 girl all succeeding in organized minor hockey, sort of took me under their wing as a relatively new preacher.

The father of that tightly-knit group had himself played junior hockey for the Edmonton Oil Kings in their 1960s glory days, but in adulthood he'd struggled with work. He was a good friend but a tough character, his junior hockey career centring mostly around the role of enforcer.

Not long into my time in that congregation my friend's wife shared with me that the song "Give Thanks" always affected her husband, always brought a tear to his eye. For a few Sundays I glanced quickly in his direction a couple of times whenever we sang "Give Thanks" and sure enough I could see the emotion in his face. I never pressed him as to why that was, he wasn't the tell-all type, but knowing some of his life history I assumed it had to do with the phrase, *"And now let the weak say I am strong, let the poor say I am rich, because of what the Lord has done for us."*

In Jesus' Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12), part of the larger Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), both titles not found in the original Koine Greek manuscripts, we hear the phrases, "Bless are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... Blessed are the meek, ... and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, ... for they will inherit the earth,... they will be filled." Some claim the Beatitudes represent a type of call for literal transformation of how the world works, others that more figurative truths are revealed through its verses.

Thanksgiving may not be primarily a time of lifting our grateful prayers to God for material, physical abundance and good fortune - physical strength, material riches. More beneficially, it may be a time for praising the God whose faithfulness to us remains unshakable even in our weakness and poverty, real and/or spiritual.

Best wishes to all for a meaningful Thanksgiving!

Grace and peace,
Rev. Dave