

**“With Thanksgiving” | Philippians 4:6-20 | Thanksgiving Day**  
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For the last few months I have been volunteering with the chaplains at the Elmwood Correctional Facility and have the opportunity to sit across from inmates from a variety of different backgrounds. I don't ever know why, exactly, they are there but I do know one thing. It's not uncommon to hear them confess...God is good.

God is good? Even in here?

Yes, they say. Even in here. Perhaps especially in here.

For many, their time in jail is seen as a blessing...a wake up call telling them that it's time to make some changes in life.

God is good. Even in jail.

So it's an especially good reminder for me that yes, God *is* good.

For some of us, this might be the last thing others expect to hear come out of our mouths. Perhaps because the last year has been a struggle. Loved ones have died, jobs have been lost, health has declined. Maybe in the last year your struggle with depression has become difficult and debilitating.

However, as we heard from our Epistle text this morning, we, with the Apostle Paul can still say, “God is good...and He has been good to me”. Paul's circumstances, as he writes to the Philippian church from prison are dire. Yet, in the dark prison cell where Paul sat, he was still able to instruct the Christians in the city of Philippi to rejoice in the Lord, to not be anxious about anything, and to offer up prayers of thanksgiving to God.

Despite Paul's own trying circumstances, Paul could still speak those words: “God is good!”

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This is a day, of course, which we set aside to proclaim that God is good. We will do so later on today as we gather around a table with family or friends or both. The table may be filled with the traditional thanksgiving meal or something different altogether. Whatever happens to be on the table this Thanksgiving day, we're reminded of how God continues to care for and provide for his good creation.

Day after day, God blesses us and preserves us. Day after day the earth continues to produce an abundance of food. This is represented by the cornucopia we have decorating on the altar this morning. And God's provision for our lives will be abundantly clear later on as we carry the cans of food we've collected this month up to the altar. God has blessed us in abundance. So much so that we can give back to others in our community.

In addition to the food that graces our tables, there are also those who have joined us at the table. Moms, dads, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, friends. Indeed part of the blessings which we celebrate today are the communities in which God has placed us.

Of course, there is yet another reality. What if, for some of us, the table is sparse or nonexistent? What if those who ought to be around the table are estranged? Gone? In another city, state, or country?

If that is your reality, there is still something for which we can be thankful.

The opportunity we have as a church community to gather, not around a table but around God's word, gives us cause for thanksgiving each and every day. Each time we come together as a church, God's Word - and the gifts it imparts - are the centerpiece.

The Word of God imparts to us forgiveness as we confess our sins. Holy Communion brings to us even more forgiveness and the strengthening of our faith as we partake in the meal which Jesus instituted for our sake. Through spoken liturgy and song we echo the words of Holy Scripture.

But however it comes to us, the effect is the same. We hear the Good News of Jesus Christ, given over to death for our sins and raised up for our salvation. Our sins are now *forgiven*. Each time we gather around God's Word we hear this Gospel proclamation. And it's because of this that we, with one another, with Paul, with many of those who are incarcerated in our county, we can rejoice and be thankful.

We have been forgiven, once and for all. And because of that, no matter what we have, we can continue to proclaim that God is good! Amen.