

# “Gratitude in the Farnham Field”

October 10, 2021  
York United Ministries  
Worship Service at King City United Church  
Rev. Andrew K. Lee

## Prayer for Illumination

Reveal to us your Word, O God, living and active in our world by the power of your Holy Spirit. Let your Word pierce our hearts and open our minds, dividing good from evil, truth from falsehood, life from death; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## Scripture Reading

### Deuteronomy 26:1-11

<sup>1</sup> When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, <sup>2</sup> you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. <sup>3</sup> You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, “Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us.” <sup>4</sup> When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, <sup>5</sup> you shall make this response before the LORD your God: “A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. <sup>6</sup> When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, <sup>7</sup> we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. <sup>8</sup> The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; <sup>9</sup> and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. <sup>10</sup> So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD, have given me.” You shall set it down before the LORD your God and bow down before the LORD your God. <sup>11</sup> Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house.

**Psalm 107:1-9**

- <sup>1</sup> O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.  
<sup>2</sup> Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, those he redeemed from trouble  
<sup>3</sup> and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.  
<sup>4</sup> Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town;  
<sup>5</sup> hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.  
<sup>6</sup> Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress;  
<sup>7</sup> he led them by a straight way, until they reached an inhabited town.  
<sup>8</sup> Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind.  
<sup>9</sup> For he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things.

**Colossians 3:16-17**

- <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

One: These are the words of life, which in faith become the Living Word!  
All: **Thanks be to God.**

## < Time for the Children in All of Us >

Dance with the Spirit early in the morning; walk with the Spirit throughout the long day. Work and hope for the new life a-bornin', listen to the Spirit to show you the way!

Happy Thanksgiving! I've come back from my military training, and I'm thrilled to see you again. I'm so ready to deliver a Bible story to you. Are you ready? Yeah! Let's jump into it.

### Slide 1.

Here is the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. The Israelites who executed Exodus have finally entered into the land where God had promised to them. "I like it!" they exclaimed. Everyone was happy, but soon, they found themselves worrying about life on the land.

"The life on the land would be totally different from where we've lived. We don't have any agricultural experience, but now we have to do it for a living." So, they prayed to God: "Oh God, help us to live here. We don't know what to do."

### Slide 2.

They worked very hard. They made a tent for God and houses for themselves. They sowed seeds too.

### Slide 3.

At the time of harvest, they found a lot of fruits and grains in the field, so everyone was delighted. At the moment, a man spoke up, saying, "let us give thanks to God who gave us this land and this harvest!" "Right, first we have to worship God with gratitude!"

Slide 4.

The Israelites gathered in the tent of God and prayed: "Gracious God, thank you for saving us from the oppression of the Egyptian Empire. We remember you gave us food and water in the wilderness for 40 years and led us into the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey."

Slide 5.

and then the Israelites visited their neighbours with their abundant food to share and had a big feast. It was a great joy to everyone, not just to themselves.

My friends, Thanksgiving is not just for ourselves who received divine blessing but for everyone on the earth. So let's share our joy with our friends and neighbours, and with all nations in the world. Do you know how to share? God will pour the divine blessings and give you the wisdom to share the joy. Happy Thanksgiving. God bless you, my friends.

**<Reflection>**

Many of you may know, I successfully completed my BMOQ at Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School in Quebec and came back home Friday night. The training was a six-week program, and it is known as one of the most challenging pieces of training in the Canadian Armed Force. I slept three nights on the ground with a small plastic cover called a hooch and did field operations for 80 hrs with just a 2-hour sleep. Usually, I sleep for 6 hours in my civilian life, so this 40 hr operation with a 2-hour sleep and another 40 hr operation was unimaginable. At the first moment of the

operation in the field, it poured rain, so we soaked up the rain and had to do the field operation all day long. The training program was brutal. No one was happy or intrigued by that. But I can tell the one thing that made us proceed was communality. That is, there was a strong will to go through this difficulty, so everyone supported and helped each other build a team spirit and achieve the mission's goal. Individuals are weak, but together our team was strong. I hope we, King City United Church members have this kind of team spirit in the mission of God.

Whether in the garrison or on the field, we had hard times; lack of sleep, limited free time, other educations, etc. Among the hardships, it was so aggressive when we had to eat our meals in a few minutes. The food was excellent. The cafeteria offers a full course of meals, including desserts. But the problem was that we had to eat them in a minimal amount of time. I literally used two hands to shove the food up into my mouth. No distinction or order of foods: From dessert, appetizer, to entrée and beverage, I gulped them down at the same time. At the end of mealtime, we always felt sad and devastated.

But there was one meal that we were consoled by when we were in the training field, called Farnham. That field has been used as a firing range since 1812, and on the first meal, the instructors of the training served an excellent warm meal, not rations in plastic bags. All the trainees were so uplifted thanks to the rich feast at mealtime. The weather was pleasant on the field, and the sun was setting. Everything looked perfect. And my 8 section members gathered at one spot on the ground and were about to start the meal. "What a good meal!" "What a beautiful forest!" We all were on cloud 9, sharing our excitement. At that very moment, one of the section members spoke up: "Padre Lee, can you pray for us and the meal? We need

prayer!" "Oh yes, Padre Lee. Let's pray!" I sensed that all the members had the same feeling of gratitude, beauty, and worry about the upcoming field training in their shaky voice. I said grace in the middle of the Farnham field. I can't forget that moment, the voluntary moment of the request of prayer. I'm sure some of them were non-Christians, but we shared our joy and our worry through prayer. And I believe we overcame our hardships through our heart of gratitude and a sense of communality.

Overcoming our hardships through our gratitude and our communality, I think this is the crux of Thanksgiving Sunday for us. The unique point for Christians is to give thanks despite our difficult situations. This dedication makes Christians give thanks to God for our first harvest. Let's think about this: the first harvest is the most valuable outcome of the year in agricultural labour. Farmers are waiting and waiting for the first harvest. And as soon as they get the first harvest, they worship God by offering their first harvest. The Israelites did that. They brought their first fruit of the ground, and they prayed that God gave us this blessing. What a valuable confession to God, isn't it?

Gratitude is being expressed with words. And those words seem to be just mere words or lip service; however, when we say gratitude with our lips, the words have power, and the gratitude changes our hearts, minds, and even our lives. Once you practice saying gratitude to God, you may instantly notice something start changing in your heart. Apostle Paul, the writer of Colossians, knew the secret power of our gratitude and appreciation. So he encourages us;

**"16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. **17** And whatever you do,

in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

I reiterate: "whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." It is significant when Apostle Paul encouraged and advised through Colossians because he was in the Roman prison when writing this letter. The Roman emperor was Nero, who committed the most severe persecution over the Christians. In the most challenging time, Paul encourages Christians in Colossians to give thanks to God in every deed and word. Does it tell you something? Does it tell an important thing to us who live in a peaceful time without war and any forceful limitations of sleeping and eating like the trainees in Farnham field?

We know that the more we say bad words starting with "f," the more we can find situations to complain about. Oh, believe me, I heard it thousands of times in my training which spiritually drained me a lot. On the contrary, we are aware that the more we say "Oh, it's delicious!" at the dining table, then the more we feel that the foods are delicious. The more we say "I love you," the more we deeply love the person. Likewise, the more we say "thank God," the more we can find opportunities to give thanks to God. Words are conducive, and good divine words have power in goodwill. Do not ignore the Apostle Paul's invitation. "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." That gratitude will give us the power to overcome our hardship and make us praise God like the psalmist' praise:

**1** O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.

**2** Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, those he redeemed from trouble

**3** and he delivered them from their distress; he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things.

I believe you've lived a good spiritual life so far. But today, I encourage you to practice more giving thanks to God, giving thanks to your family and friends, and doing every deed with Thanksgiving to God. Then the power of God will reside within you.

Happy Thanksgiving to you! Let us pray silently with our gratitude and appreciation to God.