



It Is Right and Just

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Recently, I have been disturbed by the growing erasure of Thanksgiving as a legitimate holiday deserving of its moment to shine. Too many have now embraced a jump from Halloween to Christmas on November 1. In October, Target already looked like the North Pole and Black Friday had begun. When we do give Thanksgiving consideration as a holiday, we are easily caught up in holiday tropes: the consumption of too much food, the romanticization of a meal shared by the English and the Wampanoag, the distraction of parades and football. But what about the namesake activity of giving thanks?

I must confess, I find it difficult some days to be thankful and celebratory in a time where it feels the world is unraveling and upending itself. Wars are being waged that are stealing the lives of children. We have elected officials more interested in instigating physical altercations during congressional hearings than governing to ensure that vital social programs are funded to meet the growing needs and hurts of the world. In the face of all that, taking a day to share a meal with the ones we love (for those of us who can) and count our blessings can feel almost shameful, as though we are turning away from the pain consuming our world.

But it is times like these when intentional expressions of gratitude are most necessary. Dr. Robert Emmons, named the leading scientific expert on gratitude, has [long studied the positive benefits](#) of keeping a gratitude journal and engaging in other gratitude practices. Some of the social benefits found in his research are those who practice gratitude are more compassionate, more forgiving, and feel less isolated. If we are to be doers of justice in the world, we need to nurture our compassion, we must practice forgiveness and we need to act in community together.

In church, during the preface liturgy before communion, the leader will say some variation of “Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God,” and the people will respond with a variation of “It is right to give God thanks and

praise.” Some versions say it is “right and just.” Psalm 100:5 says we should joyfully give God praise and bless their name “because the Lord is good, [their] loyal love lasts forever; [their] faithfulness lasts generation after generation.” (CEB)

So, before I forget Thanksgiving and dive into the Christmas spirit, I will do the radical thing and practice gratitude: I give thanks to my family, for through their steadfast love I understand the unrelenting love and loyalty of God. I give thanks for my colleagues, for through their compassion and friendship I am sustained in the pursuit of justice. And I give thanks and praise to God for all they have done and continue to do, because doing so reminds me that even in the world’s brokenness, it is good and worth saving. Even in our brokenness we are good and worth saving. Despite everything, God hasn’t given up on us, so neither will I.

I hope that you who are reading this, wherever and with whomever you may be, that you take this day to give God thanks for something, anything. Because it is right and just to do so.

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