

Sermon Notes: November 24, 2024
[Thanksgiving Readings](#)

Focus: Thanksgiving

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

It is so easy to be anxious. Our ancestors on the African savanna survived by being hyper-vigilant and anxiously fretting about what *might* jump out and attack. The animals that attack us now in suburbia are those darn ants who come into my kitchen when it's a 100 degree day during an Tri-Valley summer.

Anxiety is the normal setting, but gratitude is the practice of swimming upstream of our genetic programming. The best thing we can do this Thanksgiving is to practice.

Practicing Thanksgiving What are you grateful for? Make a list and check it twice. Put that list in your wallet, purse, or phone. Look at it whenever it occurs to you and maybe give it updates when it seems appropriate.

But...still Grumpy? You can't force yourself out of grumpiness and you can't ungrump yourself by lecturing yourself. But you will find a way to embrace your blessings by persisting in the counting of good things. The "Oscar the grouch" in you will *eventually* appreciate it.

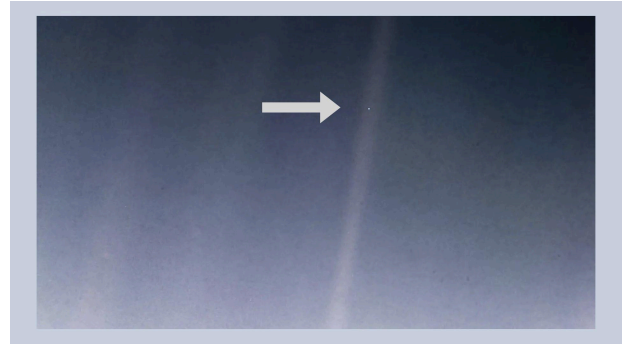
But you're still mad? Remember that God is leading you (and all your enemies) to a homeland where everyone is welcome. If you think someone is terrible maybe they are, but we are all impossibly small actors in the global drama and history. Thank God we have the ability to even consider change and advocacy.

Insignificance We are together on this weird floating circus that we call planet earth. The fact that we exist at all is a moment for gratitude and bewilderment. Carl Sagan wrote *Pale Blue Dot* in response to the Voyager spacecraft turning around to take a picture of earth from the fringes of our solar system. He reflected about our earth, our pale blue dot:

On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every

mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there--on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam...

Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark... The Earth is the only world known so far to harbor life. There is nowhere else, at least in the near future, to which our species could migrate.



Visit, yes. Settle, not yet.

Like it or not, for the moment the Earth is where we make our stand.

(The dot is hard to see unless you are on a full screen display)

Even if you can't think of a blessing right now, think, "at least we exist." That is everyone's starting line. There is much more to be grateful for than simple existence, and I am thankful for the human brain that allows us to even ponder thankfulness.

Your thanksgiving How can we look at our own family traditions to make thankfulness the baseline? May you strengthen whatever practices and traditions cultivate joy. May you find gratitude for the motley crew of friends and family that are in your life. They are "priceless" as MasterCard ads used to say. Maybe you lost someone this year, and they won't be there. Can you even find gratitude for the way they still echo across your soul? May God bless you with an experience full of peace, happiness, and joy on Thanksgiving Day and all year.

Sustaining God has and is sustaining us through our own political, economic, and emotional challenges. It is right and good for us to give our thanks to God in our neighborhoods, at St. Timothy's, and around our larger world. It is also right and good to remember our circle of family and friends, past and present, with joy.

Happy Thanksgiving.

Todd