

Sermon Notes: November 23, 2025

Focus: Thanksgiving

[Thanksgiving Readings](#)

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything.

I used to think the famous monastic, Thomas Merton, was a spiritual superhero until I read him. He is a spiritual superhero, but also grumpy and petty. I'm not sure I want to model my spiritual life after his, even as I deeply respect his influence during and after his tragic end. Years ago, I also knew monks from several orders including those in Three Rivers Michigan, whose complaining at a non-silent meal could take the paint off a wall. Monastic life has a magnificent rhythm of prayer and thankfulness, but it isn't magic. It only works if you work it.

Someone I do want to model my life after is David Steindl-Rast. He's an expert in gratitude. He's a genuinely happy monk. In his TED Talk, he reminds us that thankfulness leads to happiness—not the other way around. Happiness without gratitude fades like a warm summer day. Happiness rooted in gratitude and rejoicing can weather any storm. If you are secure in love and grateful for life as it is and could be, peace follows.

TED Talk here: <https://youtu.be/UtBsl3joYRQ>

I want to model my life after thankful monks. There's holy joy in being alive, in rejoicing that we can still stick our necks out for others. A little rejoicing and a little silliness go a long way toward that peace which surpasses all understanding and a peace which gets us moving.

Continuing Philippians from the initial quote:

But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving

I forget, until I remember, to pray for the church.

I forget, until I remember, to pray for my country.

I forget, until I remember, to pray for my family and for myself.

Let your requests be made known to God

Here I am, God, use me to strengthen my church.

Here I am, God, use me to protect my country.

Here I am, God, use me to bless my family.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

That peace is only possible because of the protection and care that surround us in Christ.

God is sustaining us through political, economic, and emotional storms. It is right and good to give our thanks back to God. It true in Danville and in the wider world. Act. Rejoice. You are loved and protected enough for today.

Todd