

Vesper's Service

Reflection: Thanks Be to God

Scripture: Colossians 3:12-17

Paul's letter to the Colossian church exhorts us to live a new life in Christ, one which the imitation of Christ becomes a garment, but a garment which becomes the fabric of our being. We must live into the virtues he displayed throughout his life: compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. We must forgive and deal with others putting love before all else.

We have lived through an extraordinary seventeen months and have needed great healing as we moved through the pain of a global pandemic. I wrote this vespers service as a great moment of gratitude for how far we've come, but this week as protocols began being reimplemented throughout the country, I admit to feeling a bit disheartened. Gratitude was far from my thoughts. I wondered if we were fighting a losing battle and asked, "God, where are you in all this?"

But the Spirit of the living God is still moving and speaking even when we are disheartened, even when we don't feel thankful for what's happening within and around us. And as I meditated on Paul's words in this section of Colossians, the word gratitude once again leapt from the page at me.

We're to be clothed in Christ and Christ was filled with gratitude: he gave thanks before feeding the 5,000, before raising Lazarus from the dead, before he gave himself to the disciples on the night of the Last Supper. He gave thanks that God is near and engaged, that he is able to give of himself so freely for the good of those around him.

I sat in at my desk and reflected on the last seventeen difficult months and the challenge that still lays ahead of us. And that's when gratitude returned to my heart. Because, while these last months have taken so much from us, they have also given. They have given us a deeper appreciation for closeness with loved ones, for presence in the spaces we inhabit together, for the service of the church which feeds, clothes, and provides spiritual nourishment. We've lost so much, but we've gained, too. As St. Paul so clearly says here: "whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks." So, it is fitting even in this challenging moment to clothe ourselves in Christ and carry on in word and in deed, with hearts that say, "Thanks be to God." Amen.