



Daily Devotion for March 25, 2020
Rev. Penney Rahm

Scripture: I Thessalonians 5:18

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Reflection

For many years, I believed the Bible told me to "give thanks for everything." At the time, my brother was withering away from a disease that killed him when he was 21. Why would I thank God for that? What kind of God would require that? Not any God I would ever worship, I vowed.

For years, I thought I couldn't be a very good Christian because I couldn't thank God for John's death, the Viet Nam War, people starving in Bangladesh, and the list went on. I couldn't embrace a God who demanded I thank him for all the evils in the world.

One day, I was reading I Thessalonians. I almost read over the verse. I went back and re-read it, then read it again. In that moment, God spoke to me and I saw God in a new way. My relationship with God was transformed.

As I read that verse, I realized I had memorized a word that wasn't there. This verse doesn't say, "Give thanks *for* everything." It says, "*In* everything, give thanks." I didn't have to thank God for every horrible situation or event. God didn't cause them to teach us lessons. God did not demand that we thank him *for* the horrible things of life. Bad stuff happens. But in the midst of evil or tragedy, pain or disaster, God continued to work for our good. God continued to bless. In the midst of turmoil and sadness, I could still be grateful. God was good, all the time. I just had to observe.

As I thought about the years of John's illness and death, I could thank God that I had a brother for 21 years. I could thank God because, my parents' marriage grew stronger through the years, when many people divorce when

a child is seriously ill or disabled. I was thankful that just as Jesus wept with Mary after Lazarus died, Jesus wept with me.

Today we are in the midst of a global pandemic. Do we thank God that thousands are sick or dying? Do we thank God that our life styles are now radically different? Do we thank God that our jobs are in peril or that we cannot visit family or friends? NO.

But we can still give thanks in the midst of these times. I thank God each day for sunshine and a pain-free ankle so I can walk in God's creation each day. I thank God for the companionship of my 2 cats and for unlimited long-distance so I can hear my friends' voices regularly. My list goes on.

In the midst of turmoil when we are angry or afraid, we can still experience blessing giving thanks that God is still working in our lives and in the world. God has not abandoned us. As we give thanks, we experience joy, peace, and a sense of hope that come from our friendship with God.

How about you? What are you thanking God for in the midst of the coronavirus and the changes in our way of life? I'd love to hear your thoughts.

Prayer

When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say
It is well, it is well, with my soul