

“First things first”

By Rev. Frances Savill

Thanksgiving Sunday - October 13, 2024

Readings:

Matthew 6:25-33

How many of you will have your Thanksgiving dinner today?

How many of you had it yesterday, anyone waiting til Monday?

What do you hope for your Thanksgiving dinner?

Some of us are looking forward to some of our favourite foods, some of us are looking forward to spending time with special people.

Mostly I think we want to be happy...

I've had great meals and not been happy.

I've been with wonderful people and not been happy.

When I think about Thanksgiving dinner, or any special holiday or gathering, what I want most is for everyone, including me to be happy.

But how do we do that?

First, it has to be said that I can't make anyone else happy.

I can't control you, and how you will respond to things.

You can make yourself miserable.

But there is a lot I can do so that I am happy.
There is a lot you can do so that you will be happy.

Being happy in life is a matter of three things according to researchers: our character, our circumstances and our choice.

Some of us were born with a happier disposition. It's how we are wired, it's genetics, it's the way God made us.

Other folks are more melancholy by nature, it's how God made them.

But it's only one factor in whether you will be happy or not.

The second factor is our circumstances, but studies show that circumstances only have a very small part to play on whether we are happy or not.

People with less money, less stuff, less security, more hardships, are not necessarily less happy.

People with more money, more stuff, more security, fewer hardships, are not necessarily happier.

What seems to make the most difference is whether we will choose to be happy.

Now there's no happy button, you can't make yourself automatically happy.

But as we turn to Jesus, ever our teacher, our Rabbi, he shows us how to be happy, how to live the good life, a blessed life of joy.

Our passage this morning is part of the sermon on the mount, where Jesus teaches about the good life.

Hear our passage words from the master teacher Jesus:

If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

Jesus is contrasting two different ways to live. You can either focus your attention and thoughts on getting, on what you need, on the unpredictability of life, on the uncertainty of today and tomorrow, on the cares of this life both the

real and the imagined concerns, or you can focus on God, God's provision, God-reality, God-initiative.

We can either be preoccupied with getting, or we can respond to all that God has given and is giving us.

Jesus' words are "seek first the kingdom of God" which means focus on God, God's kingdom, living rightly related to God, and rightly related to one another, and the other things will fall into place for us.

The everything else you need that will be given is given to "you" plural.

As we as a community seek first God's kingdom, as we care for one another, serve one another, love one another, God will provide in the community, through the community, with God's blessing on the community.

And we see it here.

We are all blessed, we all find the good life, the happy blessed, joyful life in God's presence together as we share the gifts and blessings of God, as we care for one another, as our concern is for God's kingdom marked by love of God and love of neighbour.

I know that my Thanksgiving meal, my weekend, my day, any day, every day is much happier, much more joyful when I seek God's kingdom first, when my focus is on God, on what God has done, God-reality, God-initiative and God-provisions.

So for 5 minutes I'm going to invite you to do that.

Consider **God reality**, including maybe that God is our Creator, creator of our friends and family, Creator of the beauty and abundance of creation.

God- initiative – God loved us from before our creation, God came to us in Jesus, God's Holy Spirit dwells with us,

God-provisions – I live in a beautiful country, I have a job, and children, I have warm clothes for these colder days, I have this church community and friends.

And as I steep myself in God's giving, my heart is filled with thankfulness and joy, and being aware of the abundance of God's gifts, it spills over into love for the people around me.

May God bless you with a truly happy thanksgiving, filled with the knowledge of all that God has done, and is doing for you, in you and through you.

May your heart and mind be steeped in God's work, God's gifts, and who God is, so you can respond to all that God has done for you with thankfulness and generosity.

Thanks be to God.