

Steeple News

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The Power of Gratitude

This is a story about a man who noticed his friend is always happy. If there was bad weather, he celebrated the shapes of the clouds; if it stormed, he went out on his front porch to watch and wonder. Every day, he seemed to awaken, not with anxiety and depression but with rejoicing. Kindly, he asked his friend, "What is the secret of your happiness? You are not a wealthy man. You are not exempt from the heaviness and pain of this world, yet you are happy all the time."

His friend replied with one word: "Gratitude."

That is a lesson for all of us: to be grateful for what we have in life. However, there are those who will say, "I have nothing for which to be grateful. I am sore and tired. My dreams for my life have all disappeared and turned to ashes. The world is dark and getting darker."

This might seem to be true, but yet the very essence of gratitude is learning to love instead of endlessly wishing for something different. Gratitude touches the cold stones of reality with light. Are there problems in life? Yes, but we do have the power to do something about them. That's a reason to be grateful. Is the world sometimes hard and cruel? Of course. But it is also beautiful. Do we cry because life is short? Yet, it's brevity adds poignancy to every experience, and we love what we love all the more.

When we are endlessly pining for a different situation, perhaps we should stop and ask ourselves, "Have I seen the gifts I already have? Have I opened my eyes to the heavenly reflections that are already around me?"

God has asked us to give thanks even when there seems little reason to be grateful. The reason, perhaps, as in all the Lord gives us and asks of us, is for our own happiness. One ancient proverb says, "A gift unacknowledged is a gift unreceived." It is undoubtedly for this reason that the Lord has asked that gratitude be a part of our prayers.

The Savior cleansed ten lepers one day, and all of them except one rushed away without giving thanks. Only one returned and expressed gratitude for the miracle which changed his life. Jesus asked, "Where are the other nine, were there not ten who were cleansed?" Why did it matter to Him? Surely the gratitude could not add anything to Christ's stature. It is because the Lord requests of us only things that add to our happiness.

Gratitude helps give us the proper perspective to be happy. Truly, a thankful heart is a rejoicing heart.

Rev. Hans Lillejord