

## **Make a joyful noise to the LORD** **Psalm 100**

### **Happy Thanksgiving!**

Thanksgiving in 2020 is very different from other years. Normally, at this time of year, we are busy buying presents for our family members, traveling for family gatherings, and preparing for Thanksgiving dinner. But this year, we may not be able to gather with family due to Covid-19 with so many restrictions on traveling and social gatherings. Asbury UMC and St. Peter's church normally have an ecumenical service on Thanksgiving Eve but this worship service had to be canceled. Black Friday is a big day for shopping but I don't think there will be any huge crowds at shopping malls on Black Friday. Covid-19 has disrupted our Thanksgiving and we don't like it. Perhaps, the only good thing Covid-19 has done this Thanksgiving is that it may have spared the lives of thousands of turkeys.

Due to the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, we don't feel the season of gratitude and thanksgiving. Some people suffer from virus infection. Many people have to endure the economic hardships. Some struggle with Coronavirus-Blues due to the prolonged isolation. Can we still be grateful and make joyful noises?

Of course, we can...! because God has given us more things to be grateful for than things to complain about. All we need is to look for those blessings to be grateful for. One of our church members is doing a gratitude challenge on Facebook. I am enjoying reading her posts about what she is grateful for. Family, friends, retirement, new technology, veterans. Her posts remind me that we don't exist alone and our sense of gratitude fundamentally comes from those relationships with our family, friends, neighbors, nature and God. We owe everyone for everything that happens in our lives. We owe our lives to each other and God, our divine parents. This unbreakable bond between God and us and among us is the source of our gratitude. The more we realize these channels of blessing, the more we will be grateful in all circumstances.

In the United States, the fourth Thursday of November is Thanksgiving Day. In Korean Christianity, we celebrate Thanksgiving Day on the third Sunday of November. The basic meaning of thanksgiving in the Korean church is similar to the United States: Gratitude for the harvest and abundance. But there is one more meaning of thanksgiving. Korean churches celebrate Thanksgiving Day on the third Sunday of November as a way of remembering and celebrating the arrival of the first Christian missionary to Korea from the United States. The first missionary arrived and settled in the Korean peninsula in November. Many missionaries came to Korea and served Koreans with their whole hearts. Because of them, I am able to be with you this morning and I am grateful for them.

There are still many things to be grateful for even in the midst of the pandemic, and gratitude can change our common days into thanksgivings. Take a moment and think of what you are grateful for.

What are you thankful for? I am grateful for my wife, an energizer and a ball of positive energy. I am also grateful for my family in Korea. Of course, I am grateful for our loving Asbury UMC. You have become my extended family in the United States. Most of all, I am grateful for God's amazing grace. Even in this time of pandemic, God's amazing grace is with us. The reason for our gratitude.

As the psalmist praises, "God is good and his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations." (v. 5) "So let us make a joyful noise to the Lord... Enter his gates

with thanksgiving... Give thanks to him, bless his name.” (v1, 4) Happy thanksgiving and God bless you. Amen.