

## What is the power in thank you

This past week has held some difficult news for us to hear; so much violence this past week. The decision of the grand jury in Ferguson Missouri, the media involvement, the riots, the response of politicians - there are so many places to point fingers to cry out about what went wrong.

It is difficult at a time like this to think of being grateful. I sat down at a Thanksgiving table this past week with family and friends and I was so very grateful for these people in my life who have been through so much with me. We have a shared history that is thick and complex and wonderful. And yet there was a sense of guilt - how was it that we got to sit down and celebrate, how was it that all of us were in good health and had been able to travel easily. What about those folks who could not travel so easily - who did not have family - who did not have enough food, who were not so lucky?

It is easy in a time like this to lose heart. To sort of fold up and say there is no use, all is lost. It is not a time when one wants to be told to count one's blessings. I think the intent of counting one's blessings is to find some balance - to remember all is not lost. But the impact, at a time like this, of counting ones blessings is that it feels like we are being asked to cover up what has gone wrong and forget about it.

I want to suggest that gratitude is not our response to this past weeks happenings, for how could one be grateful. One could feel many things. Even Benjamin Watson who plays for the New Orleans Saints posted on Facebook his feelings about the decision from the Grand Jury in Ferguson. He listed himself as being angry, frustrated, fearful, embarrassed, sad, sympathetic, offended confused, introspective, hopeless, hopeful. We can have many emotional reactions to the events of this past week

AND

This is exactly the time that we need to remember what we can be

grateful for. Some of us in this congregation are really struggling - unpaid bills are juggled and food pantries are visited, some of us have more than enough. But no matter what our financial situation, or family situation, or health situation we each can be grateful.

Returning anger for anger, creates more anger. Returning hopelessness for hopelessness, simply creates more hopelessness. Returning fear for fear makes this world tremble. Our UU faith calls us, demands us to help create the beloved community NOW

Today more than ever each of us needs, the world needs our gratitude.

Being thankful, being grateful is a choice that I can make. Take snow days. Long ago when I first moved to the Syracuse area snow days frustrated me. I had plans and appointments and having children stay home from school, having other people not be able to make a meeting irritated me. Somewhere along the way I have come to adore snow days. I now understand that it is mother's nature's way of saying slow down take a moment breathe enjoy the day. It is all in my attitude there is nothing different about snow days.

Thich Nan Han

"People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child -- our own two eyes. All is a miracle."

— Thích Nhất Hạnh

And it is a miracle. When we make that choice to remember to be grateful it allows us to meet the injustices of this world with an attitude that gives us a power to change the world. If I allow the wrong, the bad, the evil things that happen in this world to make me angry or fearful then I begin to see folks who are not me as "The Other" - someone to be feared and hated, someone to be objectified.

The creation of the beloved community will only happen when we stop blaming one another. It will only happen when we begin to take responsibility to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

So let this be a lesson to us moving forward. Black people are not the enemy; white people are not the enemy; Immigrants are not the enemy; Latinos are not the enemy; Asian people are not the enemy; Transgender people are not the enemy; Bisexual people are not the enemy. The only enemy is when any of us is treated like “The Other,” and turned away from a table that should be set first with love.” <https://spirituwellness.wordpress.com/2014/11/24/no-dinner-plans/> statement made by CLF

Gratitude is not a response to what I have - gratitude is not like the thank you that you were forced to say as a child for the sweater that you did not want. Gratitude is not a response it is a beginning point. Gratitude is a spiritual practice that allows us to see ourselves as we really are and others as they really are. Gratitude can allow us to be welcoming it allows us to stand on the side of love. When we begin with the humility of gratefulness we can see the miracle that is this world. We can see how big the table is. We can invite all to the table. There is enough that is the miracle, and gratitude will show us how to share it, and how to build the beloved community here and now.