

And For Everything Else Thanks
Thanks for everything that Enriches Life
Matthew 6:25-34
Ypsilanti First United Methodist Church
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In this season of thanksgiving it is important for us to remember how much we take for granted and how easily we miss what is right in front of us.

Pulitzer Prize winning poet, Gwendolyn Brooks puts it this way:

*"Exhaust the little moment. Soon it dies. And be it gash or gold, it will not come again in this identical disguise."*¹

In order to be truly thankful we have to stop and smell the roses. We have to slow down and consider the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. For when we are mindful of these things, we more easily see the truth of life and it's myriad of blessings which are all around us.

In order to see our blessings, we need to be mindful of them. Most of the time our minds are preoccupied with many things. Especially worry. Of course there is lots to worry about, especially these days. But when we go around with our minds filled with worries and preoccupations, there is simply no space in there for us to see what is actually in front of us—and therefore we miss a lot of what is really going on. And most importantly, we miss the blessings.

Jesus knew this about us, and this is what I believe he was trying to address when he said, “do not worry about your life, what you will eat, what you will wear, consider the lilies of the fields and the birds of the air.” What Jesus was getting at is a way of life where we are in the present moment—looking not at the future, nor at the past, but rather at the reality of what is presently in front of us. Be mindful, Jesus said of the beauty of a flower or the life of a bird. Be mindful of the flavor of a warm cup of coffee on a cold morning, or the delicious taste of chocolate, or the strains of a beautiful song, or a smile that someone gives to you. It is all about mindfulness. About being fully present in the here and now. Living in the moment. When we are present with life in the here and now, we discover a cornucopia of blessings.

True thankfulness comes when we are mindful of the blessings all around us. To be mindful of these things, we must live in the present moment, rather than allow our minds to be preoccupied with other things—especially with worries. Jesus reminds us and all disciples to stop and consider the lilies of the field, the birds of the air and to let tomorrow’s worries take care of themselves tomorrow. This is how we live counting our blessings. This is how we live with gratitude and thankful hearts.

The last few weeks I have been mentioning parts of this wonderful book by Patrick Henry Hughes , [I am Potential](#). Hughes is a 22 year

old college student and wonderfully talented musician, who also happens to be blind and in a wheel chair.

Hughes believes in living for the present and focusing his mind on what's happening at this exact moment. He finds that as he lives with mindfulness, his life is full of blessings. And for that he is grateful. In his book he writes that his inability to see is one of the things that fosters his mindfulness.

“ When you're blind, the here and now becomes not only more obvious but also more important. You have to focus completely on each action, no matter how small, to get anything done. Imagine something as simple as picking up a spoon. Most people can think, I need a spoon, and grab it from the table in a second. I have to concentrate, recall and process a lot of information to find the spoon quickly without having to grope all over the place. Like, did I hear Mom set it down on my right or my left? Or did she put a bunch of spoons in the middle of the table? Then, when I locate it, I have to feel it and determine which end is the handle. And, since my hands don't work quite the way they're supposed to, it takes time to position the spoon just right in my hand so that I can eat with it. With sight, you automatically grab the spoon and eat. You would locate it mindlessly—which frees your mind to constantly be ruminating about other things.”ⁱⁱⁱ

And Jesus said: Be mindful of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. What he meant by this was "Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow." (From Eugene Peterson's The Message Matthew 6:34)

When we give our entire attention to what God is doing right now in our lives, we live differently. We live thankfully. We live joyfully, because we see our blessings for what they are.

"I was 19 years old," columnist Anna Quindlen writes, "I was 19 years old when I was told that my mother had ovarian cancer and was not going to live much longer. I'd just finished my first year of university, but I was the oldest of five children, and my mother was dying. So at the beginning of what would have been my second year, I packed up my university things and found myself instead making meatloaf and administering doses of morphine in a house in the suburbs.

It is amazing how much you can learn in one year. I went home in September and my mother died in January. By April, I realized I had salvaged one thing out of the ruin of my life as I had known it: I was still alive, and I could actually take pleasure in the feeling of my lungs filling and emptying again. I looked at the daffodils and the azaleas, and Lord, they were beautiful.

I went back to university and I looked around at all the kids who found life kind of a drag. And I knew I had undergone a sea of change.

Because I was never again going to be able to see life as anything except a gift.

Oh, I've lost this feeling from time to time. Bad days and good days.

Life cycles and dark moods...And yet... It's all so terrific - the conversation and the relationships and the scenery in the midst of all our troubles...Yet instead of rejoicing, we find the glass half empty...

Life is divine. I don't mean in any cosmic way, but in all its small component parts: the feeling of one of my kid's hands inside mine, the way my husband looks when he reads with the lamp behind him, fettucine Alfredo, fudge, Pride and Prejudice. Life is made of moments, small pieces of silver amid long stretches of gravel. It would be nice if they came unsummoned, but given our busy lives, that won't happen. We have to make the time for them. So I offer this challenge: Learn to be happy...Embrace the little things of life that sometimes get left in the dust of our frenetic schedules...

Gwendolyn Brooks wrote:

Exhaust the little moment. Soon it dies.

And be it gush or gold it will not come.

Again in this identical disguise.

Sometimes we lose that wonder. And sometimes we regain it through hard lessons, the way I did. Because the year my mother died, I learned something enduring about life: that it is glorious, and we have no business taking it for granted.ⁱⁱⁱ

Consider the lilies of the field, and the birds of the air and be mindful of your blessings and what God is doing in your lives. Amen.

ⁱ Brooks, Gwendolyn from her poem **Exhaust the Little Moment**. Brooks was the first African American Writer to win a Pulitzer prize.

ⁱⁱ Hughes, Patrick Henry **I am Potential pp. 200-201**

ⁱⁱⁱ Quindlen, Anna Exhaust the Little Moments From Readers Digest, 1998 ISBN:0034-0375