

“Inflation & the Cycle of Blessings: The Flow of Grace”
Lamentations 3:22-23

I invite you to begin by taking a few deep breaths and becoming aware of the force of gravity that is holding us to the earth. We tend to take this force for granted. We never worry about it when we wake up by putting some extra weights inside our shoes in the morning or by tethering ourselves to the ground. It is just there, and we trust it each day. The same force of love is with us each day and yet we often take it for granted. The invitation of this sermon series is to become active agents in the flow of love by releasing whatever blocks us from that flow. We talked about six intentional ways or currencies that flow in our lives as part of the cycle of blessings and today, I invite you to pay attention to the flow of these and other currencies of our lives.

In our scripture for today, we hear an affirmation of faith and trust in the flow of God’s grace each day. Let’s listen to Lamentations 3:22

“The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, God’s mercies never come to an end;²³
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.”

These words are a part of a book that is about grief and lament because of the horrific events of the siege and fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE to the Babylonians. The writer is reflecting on a time of great loss and expressing deep feelings of pain. Yet, in the middle of all the loss, there is a powerful image of hope that is based in God’s grace and compassion. Here is a video from the Bible Project about this book:

<https://youtu.be/p8GDFPdaQZQ>.

I find these words from Lamentations and the experience of the people of ancient Israel to be especially important for us as we affirm the flow of the cycle of blessings. Just like the author of the book of Lamentations, we are reflecting on the aftermath of disasters. For them it was a war and exile. For us, we are still reeling from a pandemic, a major war in our world, and high inflation. There is a lot to lament and fear and it is important to grieve and to name our pain. At the same time, it is important to never lose sight of the grace that is underpinning all of life. God’s generosity and love are indeed new each morning and just like the force of gravity, they are there for us, even when we take them for granted.

If we are to get in the flow of grace, our practices of gratitude and awareness of God’s grace are so important. The anxiety of scarcity is ever with us, and our culture tends to amplify that anxiety. But in faith, we know the true story of our lives. We know that love is ever with us and that in order to live in that love, we have to trust and share the mercies and currencies of our lives.

We have a special opportunity this week as we think of Thanksgiving and the original spirit behind it, we can remember the wisdom of the original inhabitants of this land and

how they lived in thanksgiving for the great gifts of the earth and created a way of life that was based on the premise of reciprocity and generosity.

In her book, *Braiding Sweet Grass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer talks about the origins of the negative term of “Indian giver.” She writes, “This expression, used negatively today as a pejorative for someone who gives something and then wants to have it back, actually derives from a fascinating cross-cultural misinterpretation between an indigenous culture operation in a gift economy and a colonial culture predicated on the concept of private property...the indigenous people understood the value of the gift to be based on reciprocity and would be affronted if the gifts did not circulate back to them. Many of our ancient teachings counsel that whatever we have been given is supposed to be given away again.” Here is a video about this: <https://youtu.be/nr98RRHU1Yo>.

I find this to be very refreshing as it helps us question our assumptions about money and the resources of our lives. When we do that, we are freed to live by the story that is more aligned with God’s vision of abundance for the world instead of the fear and anxiety of scarcity. One of the quotes from Robin Kimmerer which I find to be very powerful is this: “All flourishing is mutual.” Keeping this in mind can have such tremendous implications for our daily lives from what we consume to what we give.

What does this mean for us who live in a culture that is based on individualism and private ownership?

I think that our challenge is great. It takes a lot of intentional effort each day to affirm God’s vision while we are living inside the story of scarcity and fear. The invitation is to keep the six currencies of our lives in mind and to find ways each day to let the currencies of truth, wellness, relationships, gracious leadership, time and place, and money flow in and through our lives. I would like us to take a few moments to share what is speaking to your spirit about these currencies right now.

One practice that is appropriate for this time of the year but also can be very powerful for each day is to give thanks for all the generous gifts of God in our lives and in our world. Taking time to ponder all the forces of the universe and the daily gifts that make life possible here on earth can transform each day for us. We are going to listen to the Thanksgiving Address that is an important part of the Haudenosaunee culture and understanding of the world. It may seem long to us but listen to the words and how they flow with that deep awareness of God’s abundance in our world:

Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address Greetings to the Natural World

The People

Today we have gathered and we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now, we bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as people.

Now our minds are one.

The Earth Mother

We are all thankful to our Mother, the Earth, for she gives us all that we need for life. She supports our feet as we walk about upon her. It gives us joy that she continues to care for us as she has from the beginning of time. To our mother, we send greetings and thanks.

Now our minds are one.

The Waters

We give thanks to all the waters of the world for quenching our thirst and providing us with strength. Water is life. We know its power in many forms- waterfalls and rain, mists and streams, rivers and oceans. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to the spirit of Water.

Now our minds are one.

The Fish

We turn our minds to all the Fish life in the water. They were instructed to cleanse and purify the water. They also give themselves to us as food. We are grateful that we can still find pure water. So, we turn now to the Fish and send our greetings and thanks. Now our minds are one.

The Plants

Now we turn toward the vast fields of Plant life. As far as the eye can see, the Plants grow, working many wonders. They sustain many life forms. With our minds gathered together, we give thanks and look forward to seeing Plant life for many generations to come.

Now our minds are one.

The Food Plants

With one mind, we turn to honor and thank all the Food Plants we harvest from the garden. Since the beginning of time, the grains, vegetables, beans and berries have helped the people survive. Many other living things draw strength from them too. We gather all the Plant Foods together as one and send them a greeting of thanks.

Now our minds are one.

The Medicine Herbs

Now we turn to all the Medicine herbs of the world. From the beginning they were instructed to take away sickness. They are always waiting and ready to heal us. We are happy there are still among us those special few who remember how to use these plants for healing. With one mind, we send greetings and thanks to the Medicines and to the keepers of the Medicines.

Now our minds are one.

The Animals

We gather our minds together to send greetings and thanks to all the Animal life in the world. They have many things to teach us as people. We are honored by them when they give up their lives so we may use their bodies as food for our people. We see them near our homes and in the deep forests. We are glad they are still here and we hope that it will always be so.

Now our minds are one

The Trees

We now turn our thoughts to the Trees. The Earth has many families of Trees who have their own instructions and uses. Some provide us with shelter and shade, others with fruit, beauty and other useful things. Many people of the world use a Tree as a symbol of peace and strength. With one mind, we greet and thank the Tree life.

Now our minds are one.

The Birds

We put our minds together as one and thank all the Birds who move and fly about over our heads. The Creator gave them beautiful songs. Each day they remind us to enjoy and appreciate life. The Eagle was chosen to be their leader. To all the Birds-from the smallest to the largest-we send our joyful greetings and thanks.

Now our minds are one.

The Four Winds

We are all thankful to the powers we know as the Four Winds. We hear their voices in the moving air as they refresh us and purify the air we breathe. They help us to bring the change of seasons. From the four directions they come, bringing us messages and giving us strength. With one mind, we send our greetings and thanks to the Four Winds.

Now our minds are one.

Closing Words

We have now arrived at the place where we end our words. Of all the things we have named, it was not our intention to leave anything out. If something was forgotten, we leave it to each individual to send such greetings and thanks in their own way.

Now our minds are one. Amen.

Thanksgiving Address: Greetings to the Natural World English version: John Stokes and Kanawahienton (David Benedict, Turtle Clan/Mohawk) Mohawk version: Rokwaho (Dan Thompson, Wolf Clan/Mohawk) Original inspiration: Tekaronianekon (Jake Swamp, Wolf Clan/Mohawk).