

Wading River Congregational Church

SERMONS IN PRINT

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THANKSGIVING EVE



Colossians 3:12-17 *"Giving Thanks"*

Thanksgiving is about many things – families getting together, a day's holiday for some people, memories of childhood – but most of all it's about *food!* We are sometimes made to feel guilty about that, but we shouldn't be: feasting as a way of celebrating God's goodness is as ancient as faith itself. It's no accident that the main memorial actions commanded for Jews and Christians are meals: the Passover Seder to recall Israel's deliverance from Egypt and becoming a nation; Communion to recall Jesus delivering his people from the slavery of sin and bringing them into his family. And one of the great biblical images of the final reconciliation of all things is the Heavenly Banquet, where redeemed people from every tribe and nation and people and tongue gather to feast and celebrate God's goodness.

So feast on! – but do so with gratitude for the food that is so readily available to us in this place and time. Let me share with you a short anecdote that I owe to Pastor Baxter at Old Steeple Church in Aquebogue. I adapt slightly what he wrote in his November church newsletter;

"It was 6pm on a Wednesday evening. I was 'riding shotgun' for my friend George as he barreled west along the LIE, his big refrigerated truck carrying 12 tons of cauliflower. It has been freshly picked that afternoon by a group of men in overalls, on their knees in the wet fields, wielding sharp knives. We were headed to the Bronx – to

the Hunts Point Terminal Produce Co-operative Market. It claims to be the biggest produce market in the world, and serves 15 million people from Long Island to upstate. \$1.5 billion annually flows through that market.

We pulled in mid-evening among hundreds of other trucks at the huge rows of loading docks that serve the warehouses where fresh food is sold, and bought and temporarily stored. Trucks come and go all night, hauling in the produce, leaving full of assorted foods for delivery to restaurants, grocery stores, supermarkets all over the Tri-State. George soon sold his 12 tons of cauliflower. Then we set out on foot around the warehouses, George clutching his "shopping list." He would drive home as fully loaded as he came, but this time with a huge variety of fresh fruit and vegetables to sell in his family's big Farm Stand along Route 25 out east.

We walked miles that night, buying sacks of onions, barrels of sweet potatoes, cases of cider from upstate, avocados from Chile. George knew all the salesmen and foremen at all the wholesale dealers; he's been doing business with them for years. We chat, then move on, our shopping list still needing to be filled. About 4am we take a break, go to the cafeteria for half an hour. The fork lifts are charging back and forth loading outgoing trucks, including George's, but we're waiting for another incoming – word is that there's a load of fresh zucchini from Texas arriving soon. George says it's not usually this late, but it's worth waiting for.

It's an all-night job, and it's dawn as we head back east on the I-95. When we get back, George's workers will unload the food he has bought that night and stock the Farm Stand for the day's shoppers in their mini-vans and SUVs. George does this as many nights a week as there is fresh produce to harvest in his fields, and never less than once a week."

He's just one guy and one truck, and his dozen workers are just one group of migrants from Latin America, out of the tens of thousands who make it possible for the rest of us to walk into the supermarket and pick up fresh vegetables and salads for our Thanksgiving Dinner. Multiply that across the nation, and realize the millions of people it takes to maintain our networks of food production and distribution. For the most part, we take it for granted, and grumble when we can't get good tomatoes any more or the lettuce isn't fresh.

So as we feast and share our stories and our thanks around the tables on Thursday, let's remember that all the good things God gives us pass through the hands of many people whose hard work we rely on. So Thanksgiving should be a time not only for thanks to God, and generosity to needy people who can't afford much this week or any week, but also gratitude to the farmers, the field and shed workers, the truckers, the merchants who bring all this bounty to our tables.

Let us pray...