



Easter Devotional Activity (4A)

Week of 3 May 2020

Practicing Gratitude

Scripture Texts:

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me." (Psalm 23:1-4)

"Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep... Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture... I came that they may have life and have it abundantly... I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep." (John 10: 7,9,10,14-15)

Reflection:

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd." In Jesus we find the paths of righteousness, the still waters, the cup overflowing. In him, we discover a goodness and mercy that gives us a new way of seeing, a forgiveness that heals, a new hope that looks beyond ourselves to abundant life.

There is nowhere we can go that is beyond the loving presence of Jesus. This week, our community begins the easing of restrictions brought on by the pandemic, and we face continued uncertainties and new decisions in our everyday lives. Yet, we find our hope, assurance, and strength within the love of the Good Shepherd who leads the way. In all times, and particularly during times of struggle, a spirit of gratitude draws our focus upward toward the One who sustains us – and it enables us to look outward in love toward others. *"And so through all the length of days, your goodness fails me never; Good Shepherd, may I sing your praise within your house forever."*¹

This week's devotional activity is an invitation to explore practices of gratitude. There are a variety of ways we can practice, recall, and share gratitude (suggestions are offered on the following page). Choose an activity that you and/or your family can take on this week as a daily practice. Check-in questions are provided at the end of the week.

At the close of each day, reflect upon the day's events. Consider big events and small moments; conversations with family, friends, and strangers; words spoken and quiet moments of reflection.

- What moment/s am I most grateful for?
- Was there anything in my day that brought me an unexpected joy?
- Even if today was one of great sorrow and struggle, where in the midst of it was God?
- Was there a word spoken, a gesture shared, or a realization that came to mind today that reminded me of God's loving presence?

¹ Verse 4 of "Such perfect love my shepherd shows" (03 May 2020)

* **Gratitude Journal** – Write down three words or short phrases of moments or things you are grateful for with each day. Keep it simple, so it is easier to keep track.

* **Gratitude Chart** – (attached) – Print out and place in a prominent area of the home. Each evening, jot down a word or short phrase of a moment or thing you are grateful for.

* **Gratitude Bowl** – Place a bowl in a prominent place in the family’s home. Throughout the day, each member of the family is encouraged to place 3 items in the bowl, expressing gratitude for some thing or moment during the day. This could either be a word or phrase written on a piece of paper or a small memento representing your gratitude, which is then placed in the bowl. *For example, a small rock collected during a walk in the park may remind you of your gratitude for a special conversation shared with your walking companion.* Before bedtime, discuss as a family the items that are placed in the bowl as remembrances of the day’s moments of gratitude.

* **Gratitude Photos** – Be on the “lookout” for moments of gratitude during your day, and record them with a photo on your smartphone, as a memento. At the end of the day, discuss those photos as a family. You may even decide to send a photo or text to someone special in your life, explaining to them why you are grateful for them and/or the item photographed. Consider saving thumbnail images into a document to keep track of the week’s blessings.

End-of-Week Check In

“Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.” (Acts 2: 46-47)

The book of Acts recounts the events and growth of the early Christian church. One thing that is evident is that as the community shared together in fellowship, prayer, teaching and breaking bread, there was an overarching spirit of awe and gratitude. They shared all their resources together, so that those who had need were provided with enough, while those with plenty did not have too much excess.

How am I (are we) doing this week with practices of gratitude? Has it been easy to reflect upon blessings and to name moments of gratitude? Has it gotten easier as the week wears on to recognize and recall daily moments of gratitude?

Or has it been difficult so far? Why has this been a difficult practice thus far? What do I (we) need to do differently to be attentive to moments of gratitude?

What have I / we discovered about the daily practice of gratitude and my relationship to God? How can I /we make practicing gratitude a regular part of my spiritual relationship?

Today I am grateful to God for...

	<u>Sunday</u>		<u>Monday</u>
1.		1.	
2.		2.	
3.		3.	
	<u>Tuesday</u>		<u>Wednesday</u>
1.		1.	
2.		2.	
3.		3.	
	<u>Thursday</u>		<u>Friday</u>
1.		1.	
2.		2.	
3.		3.	
	<u>Saturday</u>		
1.			
2.			
3.			