

Matthew 6:25-33

Happy Thanksgiving! Today I am giving thanks for a brand new nephew! On Tuesday morning my sister Sarah gave birth to a healthy 7.6 pound baby boy here in San Diego – his name is Owen and both he and my sister are doing very well. I'm thrilled to have a new nephew and my whole family is in town to celebrate his birth and spend the holiday together – it's a really special time. All my kids, but especially my 5-year-old son Graysen is extremely excited to have a new cousin as well, and Graysen has been teaching me a lot about gratitude lately. Every night when we say our prayers I ask the kids what they want to pray for and Graysen has been quick to ask for prayers and "thank you's" for his Aunt Sarah and the baby cousin he will soon have.

Graysen has also been learning a lot about the history of our country and of Thanksgiving in his kindergarten class. He recently brought home a book he wanted to "read" to me – or describe rather, about the pilgrims. As he recounted the tale of the Mayflower and its arrival at Plymouth, I asked Graysen, "And who did the Pilgrims meet when they arrived in America?" He looked at me like I was truly ignorant and exclaimed, "They met Americans mom!" I paused and said, "You're right!" and realized that was not exactly the way the story was taught to me when I was a child. I just smiled and nodded while I listened to him tell me the rest of the story from that point on.

But today is a special holiday for us in America. Some time ago I was listening to a radio interview with a woman talking about the half dozen children she and her husband have adopted out of poverty from poor countries around the world. She said that while riding together in the car, one of her adopted children said, "Mommy, I can't wait for Thanksgiving!" "And why is that?" she asked. The little girl replied, "Because...ooh...all the food!" The other kids laughed and teased her, but the little girl said, "Well, I went without food for so long and I went to bed hungry for so many nights, now I have so much and there's more than enough food...it makes me so happy." Right then her mom pictured her little daughter cold and hungry for those many years before they found and adopted her...it hurt to even think of it, but she also knew that her little girl had a heart full of gratitude now. The woman then

challenged us, the listeners, "Can you imagine for just one moment not having even basic food and being chronically hungry for months or even years with no relief in sight? Even if you don't have much, if you're listening to this, you have so much more than most of the world, you have so much to give thanks for! Don't ever forget that."

Of course, it's easier to focus on what we lack or to worry about what we don't have. A few years ago I suffered a personal loss and it had been affecting me and my attitude negatively for many months. It was hard for me to feel grateful at all. But I believe God spoke to me about it through a homeless woman during a homeless meal our church was serving. As we dished out the food, my daughter Charlotte was handing out water bottles. She was nearly 6 at the time. One of the homeless women looked at her and asked me with a smile, "Is she yours?" "Yes" I said. "Wow" she said with sincerity, "you are one blessed mommy minister!" I was feeling anything but blessed at that time in my life, but this woman's words took hold of me: I looked at my situation through her eyes and her circumstances and suddenly realized she was so right: "I am one blessed mommy minister." I started telling myself that every day and it began to change me and my attitude. I truly believe God was reminding me, through her, of all that I have to be grateful for; that I really am blessed, and that while my losses are real, I needed focus more on what I have been given...my many gifts and blessings from God.

And guess what, all you gathered here today? You are one blessed group of people! Really! You are soooo blessed by God.

We are a blessed people, all of us. Each of us could probably make a long list of blessings in our lives, it's something we don't do enough. Today is a great day to count those blessings, to step outside yourself and see what others see when they look at the blessings you have.

I invite you, in the next few minutes to lay down all your fears, losses, and worries today, the worries that Jesus tells us cannot add a single hour to our span of life, all those concerns that you carry around, lay them at the foot of the altar, and focus instead on all that you have - notice that each of us are living our lives every day in the hands of a most loving God who

created us and is constantly offering us gifts, gifts we often don't even notice. We rest in God's loving hands even during moments of trial, times of loss and pain, and even in death. You are blessed and God is with us, the God who knows all that we need and has done great things for you and I. Thanks be to God!