

From the Pastor

Long about this time of year thoughts of Pilgrims, all dressed up in black and white and their hands folded in gratitude around a table, drift in and out of our minds. We think of those Pilgrims giving thanks for their harvest. Sure, they planted and tended and finally harvested their crops. But they also folded their hands in gratitude for the cooperation of the weather—the rain and sun and warmth—without which their hard work would've been in vain, without which they would have nothing to sustain themselves through the coming winter.

Harvest time doesn't have quite the same feel for us as it did for those Plymouth Rock Pilgrims we see in our minds, mainly because so few of us harvest anything. We go to the Kroger or to Schnuck's instead. And we like to think of ourselves as independent, self-sufficient, and self-reliant. We are those things to an extent, but maybe not to the extent that we like to think. We are at least as dependent as those Pilgrims and maybe more so. Like those Pilgrims, we depend upon things beyond our power to control. We still depend upon the weather. We depend upon the air we breathe and the water we drink. And we depend upon other people in processes more intricate, more encompassing than those Pilgrims could've imagined. Just think of the processes involved in bringing the harvest to your neighborhood grocery store. We are not altogether self-sufficient and self-reliant.

At the thought of their dependence did those Pilgrims fold their hands and give thanks. And gratitude is a natural, human response arising from our awareness of our dependencies. But where should we direct our thanks, our gratitude? It is difficult to thank the weather, the weather being a kind of power or natural process. Just the same is it hard to think of ourselves being grateful to water and to air; grateful *for* these things, sure, but not *to* them. These powers and processes are things. And it is difficult to be grateful to things.

Those Pilgrims that come to mind this time of year were grateful and they thanked God. God, who is, indeed, a power, a great power. But not just a power, not a faceless, impersonal power. God is personal, is like a person, is like us. Or, better, we are like God in this respect. God gives to us the things upon which we depend. God looks with kindness upon us and blesses us with what makes our lives possible. Upon this goodness and kindness are we dependent. Upon God's love do we depend and trust. To God are we grateful. It is God whom we thank.

Pastor Neal