

**Sermon**  
**St. Mary Nanoose Bay**  
**October 7, 2018**  
**Thanksgiving**  
**Matthew 7:7-12**

Spoiler alert! One of these days, on the Wayside Pulpit, you'll read the words "Tweet others as you would like to be tweeted."

In today's the Gospel reading Jesus says, "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets." These words suggest some kind of order.

And if we go back to the beginning of the passage, we can get a fuller sense of what Jesus is talking about. He is talking about give and take, of action and reaction, of an order in the world; the way God moves and acts. For Jesus tells us, "Ask, and it will be given you; search and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"

In these words we get a sense of a gracious, loving God whose nature is to respond, to give, to care for. Who is ever vigilant, almost waiting with baited breath, anticipating our next need.

So don't you think it's time we dropped the story of a judgmental, aloof, critical God? The God Jesus came to tell us about just doesn't support that story of God any longer.

In these words from the gospel reading this morning, Jesus tells us of a relational God, who not only longs for us to approach, but is so very ready to respond as soon as we are ready to receive.

It's time we dropped the vision of a God whose main activity is keeping track of our sins, judging us and doling out love accordingly.

Because in the gospel words today, Jesus tells us that God is like a loving parent, wanting only to give what will nourish, support and encourage our growth.

So it's definitely time we dropped the vision of a God who withholds, who doesn't know us personally, or have time for us individually.

In the words from the gospel reading today, Jesus tells us of the One who cares for each of us beyond what we could ask or imagine, who does not impose but waits for us to ask for what we need and then meets our needs in unexpected and powerful way. Jesus tells us while we give good gifts to our own children,- "how much more" will our God give us!

We need eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts that are open to be in relationship with God. So often when we ask God for something, we neglect to take care to see how it arrives. We take so much for

granted; not seeing all the ways in which God is responding to us in love, in abundance; with such generosity.

My friend just went for a medical procedure and because of certain experiences in her past, she panicked when she arrived at the hospital.; hyperventilating, sweating and feeling faint. The nurse was gentle and supportive and took an additional hour of time to settle and reassure her so that she was able to get the procedure done. In relating the story, my friend focused solely on her terror and how awful the procedure was. In listening to her, something jumped right out for me. Had God sent an angel to help her?!

Before I started down the road to that has ended up having me here with you today, I was having a difficult time. I had left my family, friends and business to be with my husband in a new community. I didn't know what to do, where I was meant to be. I started to develop a question to focus my intention and attention. After days of prayer and editing, I came up with the following question: "How can I truly live in the place where the depth of my own soul's calling and the deep needs of the world meet?" And for the next many months, I reflected on that question by walking, praying, journaling and watching.

The story is too long to tell here today, but one day I found myself in the Bishop's office to talk about offering some of the courses I taught around the Diocese. After some conversation, the bishop started asking some very interesting and pointed questions. Then he got quiet and then looked me right in the eye and said, "I hear a call to the priesthood." I was shocked. Then he asked, "Have you ever considered

it?” and I could answer without a doubt, “That idea have never occurred to me!” To which he said, “Would you think about it?” and I said, “I couldn’t not think about it now that you’ve brought it up!” There was more to the conversation but that’s how God answered my prayer. Not in a way I ever could have imagined. But God clearly answered my prayer. And it was for me to respond, or not.

Where we put our attention is how we experience life. Sometimes I’m overwhelmed in this position. But when I focus on how loved and supported I am and how much I’ve been given and have to give, my apprehension gives way to gratitude. And when I feel grateful, I am relaxed, generous, and open. Being grateful makes it very difficult to feel sorry for myself, to judge other others, or to focus on the negative.

I’m so blessed to be part of this community of people who are supportive, loving and generous. You give me so much! And together, we are able to create, give and share what we could never do on our own. I have so much to be thankful for; WE have so much to be thankful for.

Being grateful enables us to live and move in cooperation with this divine order; even when life is difficult, we can have peace and ease.

Being grateful means being engaged and trusting in something more mysterious and dynamic than anything else I’ve known.

Being grateful means I believe in something other than myself – someone or something *to whom* I give thanks and praise. Being grateful means being in relationship where there are questions and answers,

givers and receivers, thank-ers and thank-ees, ones who search and ones who find, hold and cherish.

Thanksgiving is all about being in relationship. Having someone to be grateful to and for. Taking risks, opening our hands and hearts, asking and receiving and then sharing what it is we have received. Because the more we ask, the more we receive, and the more we are willing to share; knowing that the One who gives loves to give. And we begin to love giving thanks. And so the endless giving and receiving, the circle and dynamic of love continues.

And that's how we get to the message that will appear someday soon on the Wayside Pulpit.... That entering into this divine way of giving and receiving, questions and answers moves people to do unto others and they have had done unto them. They want to manifest this way of God. And so it is easy for them to "tweet others as they have been tweeted," through both "thanks" and "giving."

Amen.