

Title: God Gives Us What We Need

Let us pray.

Most holy, Lord God, we especially give thanks this day for all you have given us; we ask and pray for your continual providence, encouraging us to work for the coming of your kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Not only is today turkey day, it is also turkey season. I don't know where one goes to hunt turkeys, but I do know that some cities and counties have ordinances prohibiting hunting in city limits and/or designated areas of a county. Davis is a city where hunting is not allowed in the city limits. This makes sense. Most cities don't want people shooting up their cities during hunting season. In some cities, it is bad enough without hunting seasons.

There are apparently some people who think they can skirt the law by using a bow. After all it is silent, making it hard to get caught. One such person decided to hunt turkeys in Davis with a bow. This unknown hunter, at least as of now, shot a turkey, but it didn't die. Instead, it was strutting around Davis with an arrow through its hind quarters. State Fish and Game is investigating.



Fish and Game determined that it would do more harm to the turkey to catch and heal it than it would be to leave the arrow in it. Later they did remove the arrow. When the arrow was in, the turkey became something of a celebrity in Davis.

Turkeys are also pests. So it may not have been a hunter who shot the bird. (A picture of the turkey will be with the sermon on the web site.)

Fish and Game's "Keep Me Wild" campaign offers the following advice:

- If turkeys lunch under bird feeders, remove the feeders until the turkeys go away.
- Install motion-detector sprinklers to scare turkeys from lawns.

- Turkeys don't hang around yards with dogs.
- An open umbrella is a good defense when confronted by an angry bird.
- Don't feed turkeys.

A turkey dinner or usually some kind of bird is traditional fare on this day. Our meals this day stuff us more than we stuff birds. Another tradition is Thanksgiving leftovers. Our meals this day are signs of God's loving abundance. Our meals today are signs of the kingdom of God that Jesus points us to.

We give thanks to God for all the gifts that yield a great bounty. And we are charged by God to take care of what God gives us.

Psalm 65 is a Thanksgiving psalm. It is what Thanksgiving is all about. Now, I don't usually preach on a psalm, but this psalm is *really* Thanksgiving.

The psalm, rightfully, begins by praising God. God is the source of all we have. It is to God that we give thanks for all we have. The Psalmist gives other reasons to praise God. God answers prayers. When we mess up, God forgives us.

God hears the prayers of those who are chosen. It's not clear who are chosen, but it is likely the chosen people, Israel. Those who are devoted to God will receive a special reward. Those who are loyal to God are blessed.

We recall God's power and awesome deeds. We are delivered from adversity. God is a God of hope. God's rule isn't limited to Israel. God's rule is over the whole earth. Even powerful mountains are formed by God.

The seas are calmed by God. In ancient times, water and the seas represent chaos. God controls chaos. No matter how far away people live from Jerusalem, they are awed by God's signs and wonders. The gates of the morning and the evening are the east and the west. All the earth shouts for joy for what God brings.

God waters the earth, giving our world life. God brings a bounty. The river of God is always full of water. With this water, there is enough grain for everyone to eat. The earth's furrows and ridges are shaped by God's gift of water. This is the source of the world's growth. The harvest brings a great bounty at the end of the year – a time for Thanksgiving. God's carts overflow with richness. God's carts may be the clouds, over laden with water for the earth.

Even in the wilderness, the pastures overflow. There is abundant feed for the livestock. The fertility of the land even causes the hills to be filled with joy. The meadows are full of sheep. The valleys are planted with immense fields of grain. All the land, the animals, the grasslands, and the people all sing for joy at the bounty of the land. God is creator and redeemer. For all of God's gifts, we give thanks.

God gives us water for life. But how well are we stewards of that water? Do we put trash in water? Do we engage in unsafe toilet practices near streams? Do we dump pollutants like crude oil and chemicals in water? Do we flush prescription medicine in our sewer lines?

Water is basic for life on our planet and yet oftentimes we take it for granted. Cholera and other ailments are consequences for our lack of stewardship of water. We produce air pollution which not only affects our breathing, but also makes acid rain, which pollutes our water. Climate change is changing rainfall patterns that we are already seeing: big winter storms in California and persistent drought in Texas. We have not always been kind to this great gift from God.

God gives us the gift of water. It is up to us to use this gift properly and for the greater good of all. The ethic of the environment is really very simple. It is the camping ethic. Leave a place the way you found it – assuming it is not already polluted when you first encountered it. Then the ethic is to leave the place better than the way you found it. *And* give thanks to God for the gift of water and all the other gifts that God bestows upon us.

Perhaps just like the Davis turkey who can now walk without an arrow, we give thanks to God for all the gifts that yield a great bounty. And we are charged by God to take care of what God gives us.

[Bill Lindelhof of the Sacramento Bee contributed to this sermon.]

Text: **Psalm 65** (NRSV)

- <sup>1</sup> Praise is due to you,  
O God, in Zion;  
and to you shall vows be performed,  
<sup>2</sup> O you who answer prayer!  
To you all flesh shall come.  
<sup>3</sup> When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us,  
you forgive our transgressions.  
<sup>4</sup> Happy are those whom you choose and bring near  
to live in your courts.  
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,  
your holy temple.
- <sup>5</sup> By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance,  
O God of our salvation;  
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth  
and of the farthest seas.  
<sup>6</sup> By your strength you established the mountains;  
you are girded with might.  
<sup>7</sup> You silence the roaring of the seas,  
the roaring of their waves,  
the tumult of the peoples.  
<sup>8</sup> Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs;  
you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.
- <sup>9</sup> You visit the earth and water it,  
you greatly enrich it;  
the river of God is full of water;  
you provide the people with grain,  
for so you have prepared it.  
<sup>10</sup> You water its furrows abundantly,  
settling its ridges,  
softening it with showers,  
and blessing its growth.  
<sup>11</sup> You crown the year with your bounty;  
your wagon tracks overflow with richness.  
<sup>12</sup> The pastures of the wilderness overflow,  
the hills gird themselves with joy,  
<sup>13</sup> the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,  
the valleys deck themselves with grain,  
they shout and sing together for joy. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Ps 65). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.