

County-Wide Chaplaincy

Thanks you!

November 2023

The Hard Thank You

I have a banner that hangs over our sliding glass door so that I can see it every day. It reads, *Eucharisteo!* This is a Greek word meaning thanksgiving, to be thankful. It envelops the Greek root word *charis*, meaning grace, and the derivative *chara* which is Greek for joy. Such a beautiful word and such a great reminder to live our lives full of thanksgiving and grace and joy!

But what if you are walking through a season of life where you don't feel grateful or full of grace or joy? In fact maybe you feel terribly ungrateful, and in fact even angry. What if you feel why me? Or why now? Or simply why, why, why, and none of it makes sense? Our chaplains run across this type of situation all the time. And they understand that the last thing these individuals need to hear are pat answers and reminders that good things are coming.

So what can we do and how can we encourage others when our heart feels shattered and joy feels far away? Do we beat ourselves up and demand that we buck up, chin up? Many have tried this, but I doubt it does much to help the hurting heart. Perhaps what we really need to do is be gentle with ourselves and take a step back from the chaos and as Mr. Rogers said, "look for the helpers." Hmmmm, look for the helpers??

Really?? Well, I know it sounds simplistic, but I think it provides us with an opportunity to refocus. When we are caught in the upheaval of tragedy, all we see is the ugliness. When we start looking around, "for the helpers" so to speak, we may be surprised to find we are surrounded. You see, I believe that nothing is ever all bad, even though trust me, I know it feels like it. Those "feelings" can overwhelm us and take us down. But when we refocus, and for me, invite the Lord into the whole big mess, something happens. God does meet us there and there are good and kind people all over the place, if we just look! Don't get me wrong, I am not saying this is the magic cure-all for the pain we are feeling. But I do believe it can be a start. A start for softening a hard and questioning heart, a start for taking a deep breath and letting go of some anger, and yes, maybe a start for seeing something to be grateful for, even in the mess.

I love the season of Thanksgiving! And I love the years when all I can think about are the many things I am grateful for! But for some of us, some years that Thanksgiving gratefulness is just plain hard. That is OK. We can let ourselves feel and we can take the pressure off ourselves and we can just look around... And maybe, just maybe, we will see the helpers and we will feel a seed of thankfulness sprout and then maybe that sprout will grow and pretty soon gratefulness will feel natural again.

Whether you are in a season where praise is as easy as breathing or a season where it feels like work, it is a season. Life is full of them! Ups and downs and twists and turns and all while it feels our world is falling apart in some ways! 1Peter 5:7 reminds us, "Pour out all your worries and stress upon Him and leave them there, for He always tenderly cares for you." That, my friends is our victory! We serve a mighty, mighty God! Let gratefulness prevail in our hearts even when it is hard!

County-Wide Chaplaincy is grateful for your support both in prayer and financially. You enable them to be there when it hurts and when the thank yous are hard.

Thank you, and may this Thanksgiving season bring you many opportunities to see the goodness of our Lord!

Jan Richards

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