

There is an old Irish poem by an unknown author that goes like this: “Why worry? In life there are only two things to worry about: Whether you are well, or whether you are sick. Now if you are well, you have nothing to worry about. And if you are sick, you only have two things to worry about: whether you get better, or whether you die. If you get better, you have nothing to worry about. And if you die, you only have two things to worry about: whether you go to heaven, or whether you go to hell. Now, if you go to heaven, you have nothing to worry about. And if you go to hell, you’ll be too busy shaking hands with your friends that you won’t have time to worry. So why worry?”

The word “worry” comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning to strangle or to choke. While we need to be attentive to life’s concerns, worrying about them “chokes” the joy out of life. Worrying is like driving a car with one foot on the accelerator and the other foot on the brake. The wheels are spinning, a lot of rubber is being burnt, but you are going nowhere.

Or as someone has said: “Worry is like a rocking chair. It will give you something to do but it won’t get you anywhere!” Why talk about worrying on thanksgiving. Well if you are planning a big dinner with family or friends you are probably already sitting there worried about the details. But even more important **gratitude is the perfect antidote for anxiety**. Looking over the total scope of your life, hasn’t God been good to you? Do you think the future will be any different?

In the story “Daddy Long Legs” a young girl in an orphanage is befriended by a person she does not know.

This kind stranger takes a fancy to her when she is a small child and befriends her. But he does not reveal his identity. Year after year the favors flow in from her unknown friend. She passes through her childhood years and all the way through college, pursuing opportunities provided to her by a friend whose name she does not know.

One day she happens to encounter her unknown benefactor, but she does not recognize him. He does not look like she had imagined he would look. But she finally learns his true identity and loves him--her longtime unknown friend.

Is this not a parable of our lives? We can all think of times when Christ has blessed our lives and we were not even aware of it and we love Him for it.

But there is a second thing about gratitude we ought to recognize. **Gratitude keeps blessings flowing into our lives.** Call it a self-fulfilling prophecy if you like. But grateful people seem to attract blessings.

A recent study found that people who jot down what they are thankful for each week feel more optimistic about their lives, exercise more, and even have fewer visits to the doctor than people who write down things that annoy them or even neutral events. There is something about the spirit of gratitude that is healing to the body and the soul.

Back to Ireland again for another story. "A number of years ago, a writer stayed for about a week in a farmer's house in Connemarra on the west coast of Ireland. He seemed to be always singing and whistling and was full of humor. He asked him the secret of his happiness, and his reply was: 'It's a habit of mine to be happy.'

Every morning when I awaken and every night before I go to sleep, I bless my family, the crops, the cattle, and I thank God for the wonderful harvest.”

Was this farmer always blessed with good harvests? No, but he did consider every harvest regardless of how large or how small, a blessing. There is something about a grateful attitude that seems to cause blessings to flow into a life. Gratitude allows for blessings to flow whereas anxiety chokes them off.

But there's one thing more to be said. **A person who experiences true gratitude can be a channel of blessings to others.** A truly grateful person cannot hoard God's blessings. A grateful person seeks to allow his or her blessings to flow through to others. But you already know that, don't you? You are here this day to give your thanks to God for your many blessings, and you long to pass on the blessings that you have received.

A wise man once said, “A Christian is someone who does not have to consult his bankbook to see how wealthy he really is.” And that is true of us. We may or may not have full bank accounts. But we know ourselves to be wealthy people because of our faith in Jesus Christ; we know ourselves to be blessed. And on this special day we give thanks.