

Being Thankful Greed or Gratitude

We all have personal agendas, and typically we have quite a boatload of them. Many times when it comes to personal agendas, we can become so entranced and subsequently driven by them that the actual cost of achieving them often becomes a secondary consideration, or maybe not even a consideration at all. When we're in a feverish pursuit of our agendas, we can, and we frequently will rob, pillage and/or discard many things along the way in order to achieve our agendas. Oddly enough, we can even destroy the very things that allowed us to pursue those agendas in the first place. In reality, this kind of self-pursuit is personal and cultural suicide in the making.

It seems that's we've done that with many aspects of our cultural traditions, values and foundational principles. In the apparent insanity of 21st century living, we're ruthlessly gutting out of our society the very things that raised our society as a nation unparalleled in all of human history. In the wild and ego-centric pursuit of rights, privileges, entitlements, selfish aggrandizements and self-centered agendas, we're killing the very fabric of the very nation that afforded us those very rights and privileges in the first place. It seems that we're involved in a feeding frenzy that doesn't preserve or extend the precious rights and hard-won privileges afforded to us, but that rather consumes them in our mad grab for all the things that we feel we're entitled to.

Real and Reorienting Thanksgiving

I think that we would be quite wise to stop for a moment and take stock of exactly who we've become and exactly where we're headed in this pell-mell rush of greed and 'right's grabbing.' It would seem incredibly wise to begin the careful process of comprehensively identifying and reclaiming that which we've carelessly discarded along the way, understanding that reclaiming these principles, values, ethics and morals is not about returning to an outmoded past that will bring the future to some grinding halt. Neither is it about an aversion to progressive thinking or constricting the scope of human possibilities. Rather, it's understanding that effectively reintegrating these principles, values, ethics and morals in our present breaks open impossible possibilities for the future in a way that nothing else can and nothing else will. Despite opinions to the contrary, restoring these values is the most progressive course of action that we could hope to take.

Maybe the place to begin that process is right here at this holiday that we call Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is grabbing and hoarding in reverse. It's not about getting more stuff. It's about being thankful for what we have without the underlying toxic agenda of being thankful only to get more stuff. It casts a steady eye toward what we have and not toward what we don't have. Thanksgiving is not about some antiquated social courtesy or worn tradition. Rather, it's about a wholly liberating mind-set that probably fits within the wealth and cultural advancements of the 21st century better than any other preceding century in our nation's history. Thanksgiving is free of greed, absent of agendas of acquisition, it has no hint of hoarding whatsoever, and it's not concerned with conquering. Thanksgiving realizes that if we're not thankful for what we have, then whatever we have will never be enough. And if what we have is never enough, we have doomed ourselves a mindset of impoverishment when we actually sit in plenty.

Thanksgiving as a Pause

Thanksgiving is a pause of the most precious sort. It is a time to reflect on gifts, blessings, unwarranted successes and undeserved acquisitions. Thanksgiving is a posture of both mind and heart where we recognize how terribly fortunate we are, and how much we've been blessed despite the fact that we haven't been the blessing that we should have been. It's about realizing with a starkly humbling intensity that all of life is a gift, that absolutely nothing is deserved, that everything is an unearned privilege, and that every breath that we take is handed to us with the simple request that we live onto others rather than unto self.

Thanksgiving is a pause that reminds us that life is much less about the press of pursuit, and much more about the pause of thankfulness. It reminds us that thankfulness is not shackled to the crippling confines of only the good things that happen in our lives. Rather, in the quietness of such a pause we are reminded that even horrific pain and crippling misfortune have within them the unmatched building blocks for unparalleled growth and phenomenal maturation. Thanksgiving reminds us that no matter what befalls us in life, we can always take the shards and shattered pieces, and from these charred remnants we can reconstruct a life unimaginably stronger and wildly richer than that from which the shards and pieces fell. Without Thanksgiving, we miss all of that.

Thanksgiving as a Reorientation

Thanksgiving reminds us that life is not to be focused on acquisition and accomplishment, but on an attitude of thankfulness that we have the privilege and opportunity of acquiring and accomplishing in the first place. It's not about what we can get, but that the opportunity to get things exists at all. It's a mindful orientation that life is not about a mad dash to get as many toys as we can before the next guy does. It's not about "keeping up the Jones's," or a three thousand square foot house and a white picket fence, or having two and half kids, or building financially fat portfolios.

Thanksgiving focuses on the fact that we have the privilege to envision those kinds of things and that we have the ability to actually seek them. When we embrace that kind of thinking, life takes on a preciousness. We recognize that life is not something that we acquire. Rather, it's about something that we enjoy and savor. It's not about possession as possession only diminishes the thing that we possess. It's coming to the life-altering understanding that truly precious things can't be owned anyway. Truly precious things can only be enjoyed. And the wonder of it all is not only realizing that we can't we own them, but we don't have to expend the energy in the maintenance of them in order to enjoy them. Such an understanding is liberating indeed.

Thanksgiving Calls Us Out

Make no mistake about it . . . Thanksgiving calls us out. In life, the greater the principle, the less people there are who will follow it. It is always the case that the higher the calling, the fewer the followers. Thanksgiving asks of our humanity what our humanity struggles to give. It asks that we shift away from an attitude of selfishness to an attitude of selflessness. It asks that we recognize that life is not something that we amass, but it is something at which we should be amazed. It is not the possession of objects, rather it is the privilege to be

3 - Craig D. Lounsborough, LPC

granted ample provisions. It is not the holding of life, but being held ourselves in the act of beholding life.

Thanksgiving is a titanic shift of mind and massive alteration of heart. Yet, in the end it grants us the very kind of life that we've been seeking through endless acquisition. It's the sure path to the kind of life that's deep, peaceful, content and rich, when the path we've chosen to get us there actually takes us anywhere but there. In short, an attitude of thankfulness is transformational.

Change your attitude and your life will be changed. Change your life and we begin to change our world. Maybe Thanksgiving is the very place to start.