

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY OCTOBER 13, 2019

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“The Apple of My Eye”

Based on Deuteronomy 26:1-11

With the harvest season completed, the threshing floor swept and ready for dancing, as young girls fussed over flowers in their hair, and grandmothers argued over how much garlic to add to the meat slowing cooking in the open pit, the elders of the community made their way to temple to offer gifts to the priests and to YHWH. There would be no dancing, until the ceremony was complete. There would be no feast, until a thank offering was given and accepted.

And so, the very ripest and reddest apples were chosen, along with the straightest stalks of grain with the fullest heads of wheat. The finest, Grade A produce was carefully collected, washed, and gently placed in a clean, newly woven basket for the occasion, in much the same way that many this weekend, many will have rolled grocery carts through their local supermarkets, picking out the choicest items for Thanksgiving dinner.

A cornucopia of colour, texture, taste, and smell would have been presented at

the temple, with great ritual and with the same solemnity as last week, we broke the bread and lifted the chalice at communion.

- It represented the bounty of the land.
- It was offered in thanks, and with gratitude.
- It reminded all present of their connection to the land and to the One who had given them that Promised Land.
- It made them humble.
- It was the blessing of the firstfruits.

Then you and the Levites and the foreigners residing among you shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household. (v11)

In similar fashion to our ancient ancestors, we today have brought forward the ‘firstfruits’ of our world and of our age, a cornucopia of sorts: of food and friendship, ideas and images, of the things important in our lives, and we have asked for a blessing upon these things. These images represent the bounty of our day.

- We pause from our routine of worship to say ‘thank-you’ and are

encouraged to think carefully about how blessed we are, when compared to so much of the world that worships this day in hunger, or in fear, or who hold their Bible fiercely in their hands but cannot read what is inside because they have never had the opportunity to go to school. If you allow yourself to pause and linger for a few minutes with these thoughts, you cannot help but be humbled in the enormity of what you have, when compared with what so many millions around the world, do not have.

- We are reminded that whether or not we believe Climate Change is a real thing, or simply a political and bureaucratic ploy, or both, and no matter how sophisticated we become or technologically savvy, we are still connected to our land: we need the food that comes from it; we need to build on it, we mine the resources beneath it, we walk and run upon it, and fly in the air above it every day. We must care for our earth better than we have, and treasure this resource. We only have one. There is no back up.
- We are challenged by the instructions of Deuteronomy, because if you

look carefully as the firstfruits are presented to YHWH, it is not only the apples and the grain and the figs and the olives that are offered, it is the one holding the basket.

Place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before him. (v10)

You are the one holding the basket.

When you come to this place of worship, and sing and pray and contemplate:

o You didn't *simply* fill an empty space in the pew
o You didn't *just* bring a white envelope for the plate.
o You didn't *only* bring a carton on instant oatmeal for the Starfish Backpack Program.

You brought yourself, the very best of yourself, and you offered it to your Saviour as you sat quietly in that pew, and went through the motions of standing to sing, and bowing your head to pray, and dropping your envelope onto the plate and the prescribed time.

You brought yourself before your God. And our God smiled down upon you and whispered quietly into your soul,

"You are the apple of my eye!
You are the best of the best.
You are the shiniest, brightest, loveliest image of Me.

You are the firstfruits of all my creative efforts, and I love you."

*You're my Honeybunch,
Sugarplum
Pumpy-umpy-umpkin, You're
my Sweetie Pie
You're my Cuppycake,
Gumdrop
Snoogums-Boogums, You're
the Apple of my Eye*

*And I love you so and I want
you to know
That I'll always be right here
And I love to sing sweet songs
to you
Because you are so dear
~Cuppycake Song*

Receive your blessing, this Thanksgiving.
For you are the 'firstfruits' of His creation.
Amen.