

## **Rejoice, Give Thanks, and Sing**

Thanksgiving is a time to give thanks to God for all the good things in life. Repeatedly we are told in both the Old and New Testaments to give thanks to God. Thanksgiving Day is steeped in Pilgrims and Indians and pumpkins and turkeys. In the background are thoughts of such things as peace and freedom and religious tolerance and liberty. Incredible blessings! And it is completely appropriate that we give thanks to God for them. The day also offers the opportunity for us to speak boldly of those things for which we are thankful: a sound roof over our heads, food on the table, good health, a loving partner, children, safety, shelter, my computer, my job, my bed, my vocation, and so on.

All of these things, whether the fruits of the earth or the fruits of labor, are good. But for the Christian, their inherent worth is shallow if they are not placed in the context of a faith which sees God not only as the creator of all things but also as a the Redeemer who became incarnate in Jesus Christ and who actively moves in our lives and in the lives of those around us. When our blessings are placed only in the context of creation and nature, they are ordinary and purposeless. They are cut off from a source that is intelligent, forgiving, redeeming, and caring. With Jesus Christ we know that our blessings represent the positive and redeeming power of a God who is not cut off from the painful tragedies of life. We find in Christ a love so profound that we realize that we need not look for God behind every chair or under every leaf. The good that we have in our life is part of the reflection of a God who is completely loving and good, beyond all expectations and comprehension.

So this Thanksgiving, love your neighbor. Stuff yourself with the good fruits of the earth. Share with those less fortunate. Have a good time with family and friends. The banquet of which you partake is a reflection of the heavenly banquet which awaits us in the world to come, with Jesus Christ at its head. Let us all "Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord

with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father." (Ephesians 5:18b-20)

*The Rev. Bert Eaton is Rector of St. Peter's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church , located at 503 W. Broad St. in Swansboro.*