

***CRIBB<S>NOTE - November 23, 2008***

It is not unusual to feel there is never enough...time, money, space, and so forth. We feel if only we had more of whatever it is we think we lack, we could do so much more to accomplish our goals and help others. We live with notions of scarcity and need no matter what amount we have. Some of us wish we were younger, wiser, more experienced. Again, there is that nagging sense of insufficiency that drives us into fits of desperate desire.

Years ago I had a neighbor who was alcoholic and a philosopher of sorts. Bill would always greet people with a cheerful tone and broad faced smile. Whatever else was going in his life, he never failed to offer some salutation of good will. He shared many stories about his experiences. Once he told about the time he was arrested and thrown into jail in Tijuana.

According to his description of the jail and his fellow inmates, I thought it had to have been one of the worst times of his life. Yet, in his own way, Bill talked about how his time there helped to lead him toward recovery. The men who shared his cell had their stories and together they formed a kind of bond as they slipped from stupor to sobriety. Of all the many conversations Bill and I exchanged, there was one instructive message that always remained with me.

Bill used to say, "You can't be grateful and resentful at the same time." He managed to transfer a physical law into a way of life. "Two objects can't occupy the same space at the same time" also applied to human thoughts and attitudes. Bill always repeated that simple lesson with very serious eyes and a gentle smile. His whole face lifted and lit up as he shared a bit of wit that formed the foundation of how he carried himself.

Gratitude is best expressed through generosity. An acknowledgement that we are blessed beyond reason is the basis upon which we extend ourselves to others. We can overcome our fear of scarcity and want by being liberal in our giving. Jesus instructs us to attend to each other, including strangers, as we strive to form community and bring support to those who are in need.

We may be surprised by the actual outcome of our sharing. Further, it is not necessary to keep a record of what we do. The lives of persons touched by our good efforts will reflect the impact we will have on them. Our imagination and vision of a society that cares about people will be realized.

My neighbor Bill got it right. When we are infected with a great expression of gratitude that gives thanks for all God is doing in our lives, there is no room for resentment to set in.

This Thanksgiving we have the opportunity to share good thoughts and greetings as a means of encouraging each other to recognize all the many blessings that have been bestowed on us. In so doing, we may discover our acts will inspire others to give thanks as well.