

Featured Sermon

This is a new feature of the Hinge. If you have a sermon that you would like to present before a larger Moravian audience, please do so.

Simple Prosperity
Thanksgiving 2002
Roma Combs

Let us pray. Father, I come to you in all humility and reverence. I come as one of your servants to thank you for your presence. I ask your blessing on us as we gather for worship and your guidance as we scatter to live in faith. Help us to live without prejudice or hypocrisy and prepare us for gentle acts of kindness and love toward your majestic creation. If freedom, justice, peace and simple prosperity is your will, equip us with righteousness for your sake and for our salvation. Amen.

Miles Standish must have thought that he was the luckiest man alive. The Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock had just finished the worst year imaginable. Only 50 of their band of 102 settlers had survived. Without the help of their Native American neighbors, they all would have perished. In October of 1621, after an abundant harvest, those fortunate few survivors shared a thanksgiving feast with their friends. That act of thanksgiving celebrated their simple prosperity and deliverance. We commemorate their courage and triumph tomorrow with a feast of our own.

Today, I am the luckiest man alive. I have so many blessings to be thankful for. I am thankful for a faith in the Lord that has been forged in a lifetime spiritual journey. I am thankful for this great nation we all cherish. I am thankful for Sunnyside Ministry and the hope Christ's presence there brings to desperate people. I am thankful for what this community contributes to meet the ever-increasing needs presented by those who seek help. I am thankful for the volunteers who sacrificially give of their time to do the work in service for the less fortunate. But most of all I am thankful for tomorrow. Tomorrow, I will be surrounded by the people I love most dearly, my family. Without the love and support of my family, life would be meaningless. My wife of nearly 40 years means the world to me. My three children and their spouses are a continuous source of joy for me. My five grandchildren are a world of delight. The love they have for me and the love I have for them and the love they have for each other and the love they have for all of God's creation is the purest reason for my very being. I will enjoy every minute of thanksgiving and I can't wait for the sight, sound, smell and touch of it.

But having said all that, my heart has never been so close to breaking. There are millions of people all over the world who, because of hunger, sickness, homelessness, slavery and all manner of desperation and hopelessness will never see the joy of the justice all human beings long for. The sadness I feel is for them and their families.

You see I like to think that I am a person of good intent. But I feel really threatened by the evil I see all around me. I know that evil is real. Terrorism fomented by all kinds of fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction in the wrong hands, sniper killings in the heart of our country, the abuse of women and children, the abuse of drugs, crime in the street and in the board room and everywhere in between, genocide, bigotry, hatred, war and all manner of injustice seem to be the norm for early 21st century experience. More and more of my resources are poured into the struggle against my enemies. My victories are overshadowed by the losses as the body count rises. The economy, my government and my institutions are braced against the next assault. How am I to deal with such chaos?

I cannot help but feel personally threatened by the terror of it all. The anxiety caused by the fears generated by these real dangers has sent me rushing to the edge of an abyss. I stare into the void and shudder. I have lost all sense of good judgment by what I perceive there. My uncertainties are so great that I fail to recognize that what I fear most is only the reflection of my primal need for my own personal security and salvation.

This malevolence is magnified when I increase the tension by looking for someone to blame for the unease caused by the fear I have of an unknown future. My fears drive me to protect myself with all the power at my disposal. This is why I must lay aside hard earned freedoms at security checkpoints. I must protect my nation, my institutions, my doctrine, my family and myself. My only patriotic duty seems to be an awful conflict in defense of my own personal security. Is the day coming when I must exorcize my fear by exercising my power and desire to destroy my enemies by armed might without a thought for the innocent among them? When indiscriminant destruction and death is the only option I can accept, then the beast in that abyss has finally won the battle between good and evil!

But No No No! I will not choose destruction! I will not choose death! I will not be afraid! Because the Lord has promised us that we do have the strength to face this fear and turn away from this precipice of terror. “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

Freedom, justice, peace and simple prosperity is what we must give thanks for. That is our heritage and that must be our legacy to the world. The Lord said set my people free. We must trust freedom. The Lord said he wanted to see a mighty flood of justice, a torrent of doing good. We must do justice. The Lord said blessed are the peacemakers. We must seek peace. The Lord saves us for the transforming work that we can do in his name. We must transform humanity for the sake of simple prosperity.

Simple prosperity is crucial in ending the cycle of violent destruction we seem trapped in. Poverty is the major cause for hunger, sickness, hopelessness, outrage and violence. Simple prosperity is the cure. Simple prosperity was present for a while in the Garden of Eden. The early Christians lived it. The Pilgrims celebrated it. Simple prosperity means that families are able to feed, clothe, shelter and care for themselves in peace and harmony. We should use our abundance to end the scarcity. We should help achieve this prosperity by supporting those who seek freedom, justice and peace wherever and whoever they may be. If we do that we will bind their hope to our thanksgiving. The world will simply be a safer place for us all.

We will walk out that door into a world full of injustice, self-righteousness, violence, and hatred. In that world we must search for justice, righteousness, peace and love. We will find many others who want the same kind of world we seek. We will help find simple prosperity for all who seek it. We will not be afraid! We will not destroy! We will not loose the beast!

We will walk out that door and try to live our lives as an example of the humility that is born of true wisdom, is pure, peace-loving, gentle, approachable, full of tolerant thought and kindly action, with no breath of favoritism or hint of hypocrisy. For the wisest of people are peacemakers who go about quietly sowing for a harvest of righteousness which should be gathered in themselves and others.

Because the “ Lord is good and his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness is to all generations.” Thanks be to God.

Roma Combs is Director of Sunnyside Ministries, a mission of the Southern Province in Winston-Salem, N.C.
