

The other day was the birthday of one of my good friends, and I gave her a call to talk and celebrate our journey together. During our conversation, we talked about how much we missed going out together for lunch since her moving away from Americus.

We would go out to a local restaurant and find a table in a corner of the room. The food was served and was before us: full of steaming promise, full of good things to come.

It is our custom to express our thanks to God before we eat. Food has a way of being so basic that it represents all of God's gift to us in a particular sort of way. And so we express our thanks for food every time we eat it.

There was something about my friend's prayer of thanksgiving that stuck with me. In her prayer she said, "we thank you Lord, for all blessings both seen and unseen." Blessing both seen and unseen--my imagination went wild!

Seen blessings are, at least on the surface, easy objects of our Thanksgiving. I look at my family. There they are tangible, real flesh and blood people for whom I am thankful. We share the love that is unique. We share a common history. We are "family" and I am grateful.

Recently, I looked out my window about 6:00pm to discover that the sky was a sheet of brilliant red. I could see just enough to know that the sunset was spectacular. I wanted to see more and went outside. What I had seen from my window was only a fraction of what was available. The entire horizon was ablaze with the beauty that I will remember for a long time. Thanks be to God for seen blessings!

But what are the unseen blessings? I don't know all I should about this. However, I think that there are at least two categories. The first is wonderful things that happen to us that we don't know about for a long time, perhaps never. The second is the absence of bad things that avoid us.

How can there be wonderful things in your life that you don't know about? Consider this how many times have you gone to a particular place for no earthly shattering reason and casually met someone there who turned out to be a significant person to you years afterward? The blessing was there but you couldn't see it at the time.

How many times does an adult say something to a child (or another adult) that really helps shape that person's life in a positive direction? The comment will likely not be remembered. The result, however, was that the compliment helped another person feel capable and worthwhile. Lord, thank you for unseen blessings!

All of us can imagine the unseen blessings of bad things that didn't happen. It is easy to fill in this category with the accident that never took place, the disease that we did not get and the stress that we did not experience because someone else steered troubled waters before we arrived. Thank God for unseen blessings!

There is something deeper to all of this than simply "counting our blessings." Our whole lives are affected. Albert Einstein was starting to get at it when he said, "1000 times every Day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depends on the labors of other people, living and dead." It is only when Dr. Einstein could admit his dependency on others that he could count his blessings.

Ultimately we are all dependent on God who created us knows us. That's what Thanksgiving is all about: knowing our dependency on God and living with the knowledge that God is faithful to us and loves us with the love that will never let us go. How could we respond to life any other way than to be thankful for our blessings both seen and unseen?

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