



Thanksgiving and Gratitude



The Thanksgiving holiday reminds us to be grateful. People who demonstrate gratitude tend to be strong. Several years ago, as a Meals on Wheels volunteer I regularly delivered food to a physically frail, but emotionally strong, older woman who lived alone. I would always ring her doorbell when delivering food, and she would slowly come to the door to greet me. However, one day when I rang the doorbell, I heard her feebly say “please come in” from inside the house. I entered, and saw that she was on the floor in her living room. She calmly told me she had fallen several hours earlier, and could not get up. Fortunately she was not hurt, but I was of course aghast that she had been helpless on the floor for hours. However, she was happy and unflustered. “I knew Meals on Wheels would be coming by today,” she said, “so I knew I’d be okay.”

This woman’s focus on gratitude and hope rather than self-pity and despair has served both to humble me and to inspire me. If I were in her situation, I don’t think I would be as positive, but I can at least aspire to follow her example.

Cicero described gratitude as “not only the greatest of virtues, but also the parent of all other virtues.” That rings true to me. How deeply and regularly we feel gratitude is a powerful predictor regarding whether we are happy or sad, good or evil.

Jesus also emphasized the connection between strength and gratitude. Luke 17:11-19 tells the story of Jesus healing ten men afflicted with leprosy. When only one of the men expressed gratitude for being healed, Jesus told him, “Rise and go, your faith has made you well.”

On this Thanksgiving holiday, may God bless us with gratitude, and may He bless us with strength.

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