

Scripture Readings:
Philippians 4:4-9
2 Corinthians 9:6-15

"Stone Soup"

Today, I want to tell you a story. Some of you have heard the story before and some of you have not. It is the story of Stone Soup. There are many versions of it around. My version goes like this:

Once upon a time a stranger rode his tired horse down a back country road on his way home from a long journey. It was late afternoon and the man was tired and hungry. Ahead he saw a small village. "I'll get something to eat there and find a place for the night.", he thought.

Suddenly the horse tripped, throwing the stranger to the ground. As he brushed himself off, he saw that the horse had stumbled over a rock sticking out of the ground in the middle of the road. He walked over to it and dug it out of the earth so that it would not trip anyone else. It was a splendid **rock**, almost perfectly round and smooth. The stranger liked the rock, so rather than throw it away, he put it in his saddle bag, climbed up on his horse, and continued into the village.

As he road past the first houses the village people stopped their to stare. He waved to several of them, but no one waved back. He got off his horse and approached a woman standing in front of a small house. "Good evening," he said cheerfully, "Could you spare a bit of food for a hungry man?"

The woman began shaking her head almost before he had finished his sentence. "We have had a poor harvest here. We are very worried that there is barely enough food for our family. I am sorry." And she walked into her house and shut the door.

The man continued to the next house where a farmer was working on his wagon. "Do you have a place at your table for a hungry traveller?" he asked. "It didn't rain during the last month before harvest," the farmer said. "What little we have is needed for our children."

At every home the stranger heard the same sad story: The harvest had been poor, there was not enough food to make it through the winter. Everyone was very worried about themselves and their immediate family.

So, completely discouraged and very hungry the man sat down under a tree in the village square. "Poor people," he thought, "in a few weeks they will be as hungry as I am."

Suddenly an idea hit him. He reached into his saddle bag, took out the stone and addressed the villagers. "Gentle folk of Squamish", he shouted, "Your worries are over. I have in my hand a special stone that will help take you through the long winter. This is a magic stone. With it you can make stone soup."

"Stone soup?" and old man repeated. "I have never heard of stone soup."
"The wonder of stone soup," the stranger continued, "is that it not only feeds hungry people, it also brings people together. Now who has a large empty pot?"

Quickly a huge **iron pot** was found, and delivered to the stranger in a wheel barrow. "The kettle is barely large enough, but it will do," the stranger said. "Now we must fill the pot with water and start a fire."

Eager hands carried **jugs of water** and **firewood**. Soon the pot was placed over a roaring fire. As the water began to boil the stranger dramatically raised the magic stone above his head, and then he gently placed it in the kettle.

"Stone soup needs **salt and pepper**," the stranger announced.

Two children ran to find salt and pepper. After the water had boiled for few minutes the stranger sipped the brew. "This stone makes an excellent soup, but it would be better if we had a few **carrots**."

"We have a few carrots that we're willing to share," a farmer replied. Immediately his daughter ran home and returned with an apron full of carrots.

"Its too bad the harvest was so bad," said the stranger. "Stone soup is always much more tasty when we add a **cabbage** or two."

"I think I know where to find a cabbage," a young mother shouted as she dashed towards her home. When she returned she was carrying three large cabbages.

The stranger was busy slicing carrots and cabbages with his hunting **knife**. "The last time I made stone soup was at the castle of a rich man. He added a few **potatoes** and a bit of **beef**."

Several people talked quietly, "A bit of beef and we can eat like rich people", they whispered. They went home and soon returned not only with beef and potatoes, but some brought **milk**, **onions** and barley too.

By the time the soup was ready it was almost dark. It was the most delicious soup that they had ever smelled and to think, it all came from the magic stone. The stranger finally declare that it was done and invited everyone to have as much as they could eat.

After everyone had eaten their fill, some folk brought out their fiddles. Everyone began to sing and dance - and they continued till the wee hours of the morning. Never had the village people had such a wonderful party.

The next morning the whole village gathered to say goodbye to the stranger. As he mounted his horse a small child called out, "You forgot to take your magic stone!"

The stranger smiled. "I am going to leave the stone with you as gift of gratitude for your hospitality," he said. "Remember, as long as you make stone soup, you will never have to worry about being hungry."

As he rode off a grandfather put his arm around the shoulders of his young granddaughter and said, "Do you remember the other bit of magic that the stranger promised when you make stone soup?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, "the stone brings people closer together."

Today we celebrate the goodness of our God who has provided for us abundantly from the earth, sea, and sky. Today we live in gratitude for a God who has provided us with a community of friends and family who when we draw together we feed one another body and soul. This God who give to us with unconditional love calls us to live with the same kind of grace as we share and care with and for one another.

As we give thanks today let us remember the gifts of life we share in this place in which we live. Many of you will have heard some of these facts before but on this day in which we are called to gratitude they are a welcome reminder.

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more blessed than the million who will not survive the week..

If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 500 million people around the world..

If you attend a church meeting without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more blessed that almost three billion people in the world.

If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the worlds wealthy..

If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful, you are blessed because the majority can, but most do not..

The story of Stone Soup is a story about sharing and caring when blessings seem scarce. The stone is said to bring people closer together, and feed those who are hungry. This story reminds us that everyone has something to offer, something to give. No matter how poor one may seem, they have something to give or contribute. Each and everyone of us has some gift or contribution we can make for the betterment of all. So if you feel you have nothing to offer remember God has created you for wholeness, God has created you to share your gifts with the world.

If you feel that others have nothing to give, please take notice of God working within and through them. We who may be rich as the world counts riches should not slight or ignore the gifts of any.

Some of us here have more and some of us have less - but each one of us has something we can share - some way in which we can offer God's healing touch - some way in which we can come together and add to the pot that feeds all who hunger for food and drink of our bodies and souls.

This Thanksgiving day is not simply about sharing whether it be from our abundance or from our relative poverty. Rather it's a day of gratitude for all we have. We have an opportunity to give thanks for the blessings in our lives. We have an opportunity to be awakened to the things we have that we take for granted. We have an opportunity to notice the gifts of everyone we encounter.

We have an opportunity to rejoice in the Lord always and to let go of our worries and our wonderings and in prayer and supplication Give Thanks with grateful hearts. And as we live in gratitude may we share with one another our abundant blessings. May we look at each day, each moment, and each blessing through the lens of abundance rather than scarcity. That we may be see how rich we are in love, in life and in grace.

Give Thanks we grateful hearts this day and every day.
Amen.