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I am not going to speak to you tonight about the history of the Thanksgiving holiday, as interesting as it is.

Nor am I going to speak to you about President Abraham Lincoln, who first declared Thanksgiving to be a national holiday, as fascinating as he is.

Nor am I going to try to justify the word “blessing,” a word I must finally confess I do not understand....because it seems I am simply unable to reconcile my abundant blessings of food and shelter and family with those in this world who have none of those things. No matter what word games we play, we always seem to end up somehow implying that God withholds blessings from some and showers them on others, and I am simply uncomfortable even trying to defend God in this matter. So I won’t.

And so, I will proclaim to you a litany of Thanksgiving. It is a collection of things I am thankful for. It is my earnest hope that you will find this more interesting than, say, Thoreau’s “Walden,” who spends hours rejoicing in the carpenter ants and honey bees...while such minutiae are praiseworthy, I will try my best to make broad strokes that will inspire you and fill you with joy...that is my hope, at least. And while it at first might seem to be all about me, you will soon discover it is all about *you*...and subsequently, all about *God*.

What am I thankful for?

I am thankful for the cup of coffee I am drinking as I write this sermon, and for the farmer who grew and harvested the beans, and for all those who worked to bring it from their fields to my mug. For me, coffee is not merely a beverage. It is a tie to very special memories, from very special times. The scent and taste of coffee reminds me of my favorite café in Vienna, of train-rides across the wetlands of Holland, of late night talks with my host father in Russia, trying to communicate using four different languages, with much laughter.

I am thankful for my little untended garden, and your gardens and orchards, whose produce will grace my Thanksgiving table in the forms of applesauce and sweet corn and butternut squash.

I am thankful for my neighbors, who look out for me, who care for me and pray for me. I am thankful that they notice when I am sad, when my garage door is up, when my trunk is open, when my garbage isn’t at the curb on Friday mornings, when my garden hose is still turned on and gushing water from the treehouse.

I am thankful for my friends, who have come to me in the middle of the night to offer support and company during some very tough times. I am thankful for their honesty, the times when they have called me on the carpet, times when they had to speak the truth to me in love, which is a very hard thing to do.

I am thankful for my family, for my brothers, sisters-in-law, nieces, nephews, and my father...my brothers, who, even though I am a 41 year old woman, still give me wet willies, trip me when I walk by, and, for no reason, tell me, “You suck,” and my father, who has always been in my corner, always, always, always.

I am thankful for my sons—Christian, Jacob and Philip, who have allowed their lives to play out publicly, like some sort of Truman Show, as I have shared stories of their journeys from infancy to boyhood from this pulpit. I am thankful for them because

in them I see hope for a future that otherwise might seem bleak. I do not deserve their gorgeous music in the morning, their tricky geography questions I cannot answer, their insatiable zest for life...but I am humbled that God shares them with me, these three little creatures, soon to be men, whom I adore with all my mommy being.

I am thankful for Doug, who is proof to me that God delights in surprises...who came into my life when I least expected to find a partner who understands me, who truly loves me, who actually wants to grow old with me. To me, Doug embodies grace in a way I have never before encountered, and his friendship, his support, his humor and his goodness mean more to me than the moon itself.

I am thankful for you, for sticking with this funny thing called church during some pretty topsy turvy times. I am thankful for your earnest wrestling in matters of faith, for your genuine questions, for your honest struggles. I am thankful for you for being strong in faith during some times when I have felt weak, even as I hope to be strong for you when you are weak. I am thankful that we are family in Christ, joined together in baptism, whether we like it or not... ☺

I could go on and on...I am thankful for my home, which smells like lavender in the laundry room, cinnamon in the kitchen and boys' feet upstairs...I am thankful for a freezer full of beef and a pantry full of preserved fruits and vegetables as winter sets in...I am thankful for books that confound and confuse and delight...I am thankful for Puccini and Vivaldi and Brahms....I am thankful for those of you who fix my car, who iron my clothes, who babysit my kids, who rearrange my cupboards when I'm not home, who text me out of the blue just to see what's going on in my life...

The list is infinite because the grace is infinite and this is why this isn't about me but it's about you because I thank God for you, for all of you, not only for what you do, but for who you are, and that's why this then, finally, is about God...because in you I see the diversity and variety of gifts and talents that are living proof that God is anything but boring...that God is living and breathing, just as you live and breathe, and that God is active in this world, even as you are active in this world, and as I am, as we try to model in this world a kingdom that belongs to the next.

But finally, simply, I am thankful for pumpkin pie, a pie I only eat once a year. Because I know that the seeds of that pumpkin, which gave its life for my enjoyment, are out there somewhere, to be planted in the soil so that more pumpkins can grow so that more pies can be baked for future Thanksgivings, so that my grandsons and granddaughters can also enjoy a piece of Thanksgiving pumpkin pie, and pause to give thanks for all the good and beautiful things that I pray will surround them in those future years, even as they surround me now.