Let us pray… God of all blessings. We give thanks for the gift of life, for the breath that sustains us, and for the intricate tapestry of experiences that shape our days. May we know in every breath, you journey with us. From the breaking of the bread to your generous grace, may our hearts overflow with gratitude in every time and space… Amen.

Do you ever wonder if some of the lyrics from *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town* were actually inspired by our own holiday shopping lists?

You know the part… He’s making a list; he’s checking it twice…

But instead of checking the list of kid’s behavior, we are checking our own list… Our grocery list, gift list, or to-do list…

And if we are honest, I’m guessing that most of us are checking it more than twice… Just to make sure we have everything we need to pull off the perfect event.

Whether that be for Christmas, a Holiday Party, or Thanksgiving…

Because most people don’t just roll with having a bunch of people over without preparing anything or having a plan.

And even when you do have a plan, when you make a list, when you check it twice, and think… This is the year; all my ducks are in a row… And then, out of the blue, you spot a pigeon in with your ducks, and it throws everything off.

And for my family, this seems to happen almost every year at just about every event we have… But it especially seems to happen when we get together to make holiday cookies.

One year… We forgot to buy butter… So, my loving dad offered to run to the store… And once he was at the store, he decided to get some other things that he thought would be nice for our cookie baking day…

But once he got home, he realized he only grabbed one of the two grocery bags, the other bag containing the butter of course… So, he had to go back to the store yet again.

Another year, we forgot to put sugar in our peanut butter blossom cookies… Thank you grandpa for single handedly eating that batch so nothing would go to waste.

For others this might be a dried-out turkey, a pie that fell on the ground, gravy that never got made, or that salad that just didn’t make it out of the fridge…

And it is great when you can laugh off the mistakes, but sometimes, especially with the stress of the holidays, those mistakes can be enough to make a person crabby.

But thankfully, our first communion students learned something about crabby people…

God still loves them…

Which to me sounds like excellent news… Because it gives me permission, for the times when I do find myself crabby, to not be even harder on myself, for being crabby…

Instead, this allows me to choose grace, and actually allow myself to use that grace… Because grace can change everything.

And thankfully, grace is always available, because grace is continuously poured out from God.

Grace that Abraham lived out, in our reading from Genesis… Earlier we heard that Abraham was, chilling and relaxing in his tent on a hot day when some strangers arrived.

Mind you, Abraham had nothing prepared to eat nor drink, and yet he didn’t complain once. Instead, he acknowledged his situation, loaded himself up with some grace, and gave these 3 strangers 5-star hospitality.

He rushed to greet them lovingly, and with a bow. He washed their feet, and then he urgently prepared food and drink for them. Running here and running there.

He welcomed the stranger and he did so with a grateful and grace filled heart.

And isn’t that what Thanksgiving is all about… Gratitude and grace.

Grace that we give to our family members in the midst of family dynamics and friction, or grace we give to ourselves when things go haywire…

And gratitude of course, as we give thanks for that very family, we are with.

Gratitude that we also give to God, like we did at the start of the sermon, because as Christians we believe that God is active and is doing something good in our lives.

And when you think about it, gratitude and grace are also what we find at Christ’s table.

Every time we hear the words of institution, we hear, “In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks... And again, after supper, he took the cup, and gave thanks.”

Wow, Jesus has a ton more grace than I could ever comprehend… The fact that he gives thanks not once, but twice, on the very night he was betrayed.

The fact that both his body and his blood has been given and shed for you.

Means, that when you depart from here… When you go home, or to work, or to your Thanksgiving gatherings… Wherever you go, even if your road doesn’t lead to Emmaus, Christ is right there with you.

This is the good news of Christ’s table. There is always a place, just for you.

Which can be easy to forget during the busy holiday season…

Especially, if the holidays are hard for you, because you have lost loved ones.

Know there is a place for you… To honor your space to grieve while holding you and your loved ones together in Chrit’s love.

Or if you are feeling burnt out, stressed out, and exhausted… Know that there is a place for you too. To be recharged, renewed, and transformed.

Or if you really do have your ducks in a row, and are filled to the brim with holiday spirit… Know, there is a place for you too.

A place at Christ’s table… Here you are welcomed with gratitude, grace, and love by our Creator God.

A table, that tonight, will be expanded even more, as we welcome our first communion students: Lily, Daisy, Tyler, and Cullin.

Who have taken the time to prepare the bread for you tonight. Who learned about God’s love for all people, even the crabby people.

Because Christ’s table is all about forgiveness, grace, and love illuminating over all things.

Illuminating so far, that no matter where you are, Christ is with you.

So tonight, let us prepare our hearts, gather gladly, and be transformed by God’s generosity. As God gives thanks for you… Amen.