

Thanksgiving Reprise

By Carl Brown

Thank you.

Thank you for reading this. Thank you for emailing your responses. Thank you for attending worship. Thank you for supporting the pandemic worship team. Thank you for purchasing Avgen. Thank you for supporting the church. Thank you for visiting the nursing home. Thank you for phoning people. Thank you for taking care of the church buildings and grounds. Thank you for contributing to the food bank. Thank you for remembering our other mission projects.

Thank you for wearing a mask. Thank you for washing your hands.

When you hear the words “Thank you”, you probably have two reactions. Blame the vagus nerve. It has two branches, a dorsal and a ventral. One branch when activated, makes you want to reach out to others. The other branch makes you want to circle the wagons. When I say thank you, both branches are activated. You move closer to me. You’re glad to be appreciated. You want to connect. And you feel anxious. What do I want? What did you forget to do?

Giving thanks activates our moral imperative, as mammals, to be part of the herd. It affirms our connection to others. To say “thank you” means that I appreciate - value - something that *you* did for *me*. My appreciation engenders closeness, and a response: sometimes you feel an anxiety of obligation to help others.

Either way, “thank you” keeps us connected.

Thankfulness is the antithesis of the self-made man or woman. If I can do it all myself, then I don’t need anybody, and I don’t have to thank anybody. If I thank someone I am *indebted* to them: something of a weigh scale tips inside and I feel that I owe the other person for what they have done for me.

I owe Perry so much chocolate.

But it's not eye for eye. It's give and take. It's a balanced sharing of gifts. I do for you what you can't do, and you do for somebody else what they can't, and soon we have that self-supporting circle I alluded to a few weeks back, where we *support each other*.

When I say thank you, I am acknowledging your support, and I am committing to support someone else. It might be you.

We talked about how *you* feel when *I* say thank you. How do *you* feel when *you* say thank you?

I feel good when I say thank you. I feel happiness. I feel joy. If "thank you" engenders connection when others say it to us, it is doubly so when we say it to others. When I say thank you, I feel connected to the universe.

Sometimes it's hard to say thank you. We've been taught to look after ourselves, and not to show pride. We've been taught that it is wrong to accept gifts of our own that are recognized by others. "You sing well." "You're very bright." "You work hard." We want to play down compliments.

Say, "Thank you." God made you special. Unique. A gifted mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandparent, musician, poet, writer, preacher, student, teacher, accountant, worker. Thank God. And by thanking God, feel connected.

Thank you.