

Seasoned with Salt

A Sermon for Morning Worship on Thanksgiving Sunday
United Congregational Church of Westerly, UCC, Pawcatuck, CT
November 22, 2015
Text: Colossians 4:2-6

I have many happy memories of Thanksgiving going all the way back to when I was a little girl in Pennsylvania. I remember my mother frantically cleaning the house for what seemed like weeks in advance of the holiday to get ready for all the company who would gather around our dining room table. I remember three different kinds of pie – mincemeat, apple and of course, pumpkin. I remember sweet potato casserole with the marshmallows on top which always flamed up in the broiler every year. Frankly it just wasn't Thanksgiving at my house growing up until the sweet potatoes went up in flames. I remember my grandmother and my mother having their annual set-to over how to make stuffing and whether or not it should go inside the bird or not. Inside always won. I remember setting the table with the "good china" and Mom's special crystal and the silver flatware and how special it felt to use those beautiful place settings.

I also remember the beautiful crystal salt and pepper shakers – two sets of them – which were carefully placed on the table every year flanking the floral centerpiece and the two candles which would burn throughout our meal. And I remember that, in my parents' house, those salt and pepper shakers were purely

ornamental. No one used them, at least not that I recall. They just sat there on the table because they were supposed to be there. Only as an adult did I realize we were a low salt household before anyone even knew what that was. Always health conscious, my mom decided salt was not good for us back in the 60's so it took a back seat in her food preparation from then on and I was none the wiser.

So, you can imagine the shock to my system the first time I had Thanksgiving dinner at my mother-in-law's table where salt was treated like a long lost friend. Elizabeth cooked with salt, a lot of it. And then salt was always on the table because everyone added salt to everything. And I do mean everything. Elizabeth's salt and pepper shakers were silver, quite elegant and lovely, like my mom's cut glass ones. But hers lived out their intended purpose at every meal with gusto as Peter and his family salted away. At one point, I actually picked up the salt shaker and tipped it over my plate ever so gently so it would look like I was using some, so anxious was I to fit in with my new family. But one bite told me the delicious food was salty enough all on its own. So it was that I began to understand that even the simplest of things – like salt on food – become markers as to how we live our lives in concert with or in contrast to others. Who knew???

Living in concert with or in contrast to others is the challenge of life these days, isn't it? Ours is a very polarized

world, something we've come to accept more or less I think. In some respects this isn't unusual because anytime you get a bunch of people together, there are bound to be differences of opinions on things. Thanksgiving dinner tables are perfect examples of this. I'm betting at least some of you will be sitting around dinner tables this Thursday with folks you don't necessarily get along with, perhaps don't even really like that much. Let's be honest -- You wouldn't even spend time with them if they weren't family. And I'm fairly certain many of us have certain conversation topics which are just off limits at Thanksgiving dinner, politics and religion most likely topping that list. Especially this year. Am I right??? This dynamic is one of the things some folks really dread about this holiday for that very reason. It's really difficult to spend time with people who have very different opinions from yours on things that are important to you. Yet, somehow, for a few hours every Thanksgiving we swallow hard, take a deep breath and smile at that person who manages to get on our last nerve every year. So it's really no wonder that the giving thanks part of our Thanksgiving celebrations becomes sort of perfunctory. We give thanks on Thanksgiving because it's what you're supposed to do before diving into a sumptuous, once a year American feast. So every year, many of us are totally missing the point of the whole holiday.

