



A Time to Give Thanks

Without thinking, I turned north onto the street I usually use to go visit my people in the medical center. Not this time. Not this year. For more than a mile ahead of me that afternoon, multiple lanes of cars were backed up, brake lights glaring, barely moving.

Ten minutes of snail-like progress got me just two blocks closer to my destination. So finally I detoured into the neighborhood. On residential streets I took a two-mile loop east of that massive traffic jam.

In my part of my town, we have lived with this kind of frustration for several months now. Right when the state closed the main arterial roadway nearest to my church to replace the bridge across I-40, our city decided to tear up several of the closest alternate routes.

I realize that what we're fussing about is minor compared to every morning's commute in Los Angeles or Atlanta. But in our mid-sized town, we're not used to using our streets as twice-a-day parking lots. So this fall I've heard non-stop moaning and whining and cussing about the snarled traffic. Almost everybody is unhappy about this seemingly endless mess.

With Thanksgiving coming, I began to wonder if this community-wide umbrage would blight the turkey.

About that time, I was reading fellow-pastor Richard Dahlstrom's fine book, *The Map Is Not the Journey*. In it he tells of coming home to Seattle after a 40-day sabbatical spent trekking with his wife high in the Alps.

His timing was not good. Right after they returned home, they completed a long-dreamed-of move to a country home outside the metro area. Instantly he discovered that part of the price of living in heaven is getting to spend a hour or so every day in commuters' hell.

If you've visited Seattle, you know how the inner-city traffic flow can lock down, even in the calmer hours of the day. Driving to work at his church, Richard found himself "parked" on a Seattle freeway every morning.

After grumbling and groaning at first, he says he discovered he could turn that sour moment into a sweet one if he used it to thank the Lord for the freshness of the Puget breeze or the smoothness of his car's motor or the politeness of the driver who let him switch lanes.

Locked in that unmoving line of cars, he learned that gratitude is the perfect antidote for grumpiness.

It's Thanksgiving time. Instead of being grouchy, be grateful. Give thanks to the Lord and bless his Name.

By Gene Shelburne