

Reflections on Faith and Life for January 3, 2021!

Good-bye, 2020! We know God was in you, with us and in us and around us; but we're glad to see you gone!

Let's pretend. Let's pretend that God *isn't* a loving, merciful, forgiving, and giving God. Let's pretend we have to ask God for everything we need:

- Food and water, certainly,
- and bodies that can process the food and water;
- air to breathe and lungs to breathe it with;
- hands and fingers to create shelter, and brains to know how;
- skills and abilities and talents, and strength and wisdom to use them;
- health, and medical knowledge and technology readily available for healing;
- sunshine to allow plants to grow and rain to nourish growth;
- nighttime and seasons to give rhythm to our lives;
- hearts that beat to keep us alive, and that yearn for fulfillment of dreams;
- parents and grandparents, and extended family; children we can love, and can teach to love and value the things we love and value;
- values and ideals, responsibility and faithfulness;
- the capacity to feel guilt and shame, and to repent and try to make amends;
- forgiveness of sins, eternal life, the salvation of our souls.

Thank God God gives without our asking!

Now let's pretend that God might take away everything for which we *don't* give thanks...

Kind of makes you do a double-take, doesn't it? *What have I forgotten to thank God for that I don't want to lose? My three dogs who are far more than pets; they're my daily source of companionship and unconditional love. A job I love, a day off every week, wonderful people who are part of my daily life, opportunities to travel, a TV to watch the Packers and Badgers and dog shows. . . .*

Saying *thank you* is more than simply being polite. It's part of an "attitude of gratitude" that opens us up to the goodness of God. An attitude that says, "Why me, Lord," when the blessings are passed out, and that says, "Give me strength and guidance, Lord," when hard times come.

May your New Year's resolutions include the desire to give thanks to God daily for all the gifts and blessings he provides!