

We are celebrating Thanksgiving this week in worship. I know that we are a little early, but the Sunday before Thanksgiving is also a special day in the Christian year (more about that next week). So, as I prepared for worship centered on thanking God for our blessings, I thought of a book I read a few years ago, Bob Greene's *And You Know You Should Be Glad* (William Morrow, 2006). One story in particular sticks with me.

Bob Greene was sitting in an upscale restaurant in downtown Chicago. A family arrived for dinner, a family that included a disabled son whose disability caused him to make involuntary sounds and motions. As they came in and sat down, his actions and utterances caused heads to turn and some disapproving glares.

As Bob watched several of the restaurant staff approached the table, including the manager. He waited fearfully, anticipating that they would ask the family to move somewhere out of the way or even to leave, which might be against the law but still happens. One of the waitresses knelt down by the disabled young man. Bob tells the rest of the story this way:

“The waitress in a bright and cheerful voice, said: ‘Hi, Ray!’ She knelt next to where he was sitting.

“How are you doing?” she said to him, smiling and looking into his eyes.

“We’ve missed you,” one of the waiters said to him. “Where’ve you been?”

The manager said, “Welcome back, Ray! How’s everything going?”

The young man was beaming. He’d been here before; they knew him. They welcomed him. They immediately put him at ease.

And his family was so pleased. I got the impression that it was no coincidence they were repeat customers. There must have been many places where the reception for them was not so caring. There must have been many places where, because of the noise and tumult inherent in their son’s condition, the stares were mostly cold.

Seeing the staff with the young man, the other customers in the restaurant broke into appreciative smiles. That’s all it had taken – to see the family treated with such kindness and understanding was all it had taken to make the other diners regard the presence of the young man not as a minor inconvenience, but as a benefaction of sorts...” (pp.212-213)

What a picture of the kingdom of God! A place where all are welcome at the table. After such a contentious election as we have just lived through, and as we prepare to gather around tables with family and friends and give thanks for our blessings, I pray that your table is as open and warm as this table Bob Greene witnessed. I hope that you have made room for someone new or different at your table and in your lives. When we do, we receive more than we give. Hebrews tells us, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” (Hebrews 13:2). You never know who’s coming to dinner!