

Giving Thanks

IT COMES AS NO SURPRISE THAT THE SHADOWS OF dusk move into my little valley a bit earlier every day. After all, it *is* September. The good Lord never promised that the dawn hours of late May would continue to bless me until it was time for a heavy frost—when November claims its place on my well-marked calendar.

Already the buckeye trees around these old ridges are beginning to shed their gold and browning leaves, for invariably they lead the autumn color guard.

A family flock of blue-winged teal settled down on one of my welcoming ponds this morning. These lovely little waterfowl are well known for heading south to the marshes and bays of Mississippi and Louisiana far earlier than mallards or canvasbacks or other birds of the Canadian pot-hole country.

Soon my old overgrown fencerows and woodland edges will come alive with busy smaller visitors, en route as usual to the Gulf states, the dry mountains of Mexico, and the jungles and plains of South America. Their colors are not

as bright as they were in spring. Their songs and calls are less frequent and more muted, because their family time has come to its climax for the year.

I refer, of course, to the ever-active movements of tanagers and warblers, flycatchers and swallows, all now feathered in the muted colors of autumn in sharp contrast to the brilliance of their April and May plumage. These are hours to remember—days in which to give thanks, to count blessings, for those most certainly are numerous.

Remember how late summer often brings visitors, sometimes unexpected, but welcome nonetheless. Good fortune may have encouraged our own wanderings; vacations along the sunlit beaches of the Atlantic, visits with that great collection of old cousins down in Kentucky, an exciting flight across the plains and mountains of America to once more look down on the amazing land and seascape of San Francisco.

It's hardly necessary to remind ourselves that one of our favorites of the holidays that brighten our lives and our calendars is Thanksgiving—with a capital T. It is just offshore a bit, just down the road and around the next week on the calendar.

What a wonderful time to remember the good years that have come our way, the precious children and grandchildren that add sparkle and zest to our days, even sometimes beyond our diminishing tolerance and patience.

So—as I contemplate my own waning tomorrows, as I enumerate the seemingly endless blessings that have come my way, I have no desire to list my numerous little problems—the ache in my back, the halt in my step. There are more important things to do.

One of my granddaughters just called to say she is coming down to the old farm to spend the weekend with me.

In my mail today was a photograph of my very youngest great-granddaughter, wearing a wide-open smile—at six months of age, mind you.

So go our days—our years—filled to the very brim with blessings that only our Heavenly Father seems capable of bringing.

As one more Thanksgiving rolls around on the cooling winds of another November, it will be pretty easy to agree that it is well-named, this special occasion—with emphasis on the “giving.”