The Rev. Dr. David K. McIntosh
November 26, 2025- Eve of Thanksgiving Day
Given at Christ Church Quaker Farms, Oxford, CT

Deuteronomy 26.1-11; Psalm 100; Philippians 4. 4-9; John 6. 25-35

"It my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven…. I am the bread of life." †

Once again, the world around us is transforming… the weather is colder and the leaves have fallen from our trees and the flowers have faded into the dirt. Thanksgiving is sort of the Marti Gras of Autumn….
By this I mean it's the last fling of celebration and joy and excess, before the church is dimmed in Advent, as we begin that time of introspection and prayerful preparation for the coming of Mary's baby.
This holiday ushers in the period of darkness and cold, that will not change until we see the warmth and light of Spring!

I grew up in a wonderful family, and Thanksgiving was the ONE *absolute* day when all my family gathered with one another… for many of us the only day! We would gather to give thanks for what we had been given. And we always invited everybody in our neighborhood to join us (not just our good neighbors and friends, but widows who lived alone, the odd loner down the street, and even homeless people).
And after I moved away to start a new life… I remember how my mother insisted Thanksgiving was a day to give thanks and to provide a home for others (especially those who might be lonely or had no means to feast) so they too would have a place to feel loved. So, Dan and I would host Thanksgiving gatherings of 12-20 people in our first home, including my mother at times. Most of our guests were friends who were living in South Beach alone and had no family to be with… and we continued that tradition up in Kent.
My parents would often remind me that our family roots included periods when my ancestors suffered hardships… So, the lines from OT Deuteronomy are so important (especially today when there is so much political rhetoric over aliens and refugees): "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there became a great nation… The Lord brought us out with a mighty hand… into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey…" And so, we give thanks to our God, who has given us so much… indeed who have provided us the true bread from heaven!

One of my favorite Theologians, St John Chrysostom (4th cent), once stated "Men are nailed to the things of this life." That is, we are so worried about our physical survival that we hardly ever glance up from the ramparts of this world to consider the eternities beyond. We are so concerned about our physical natures and worried about what might happen to the stuff we've accumulated… Yet, Jesus and the prophets warn of spending time and money on 'what is not bread, laboring over what does not satisfy'… "Do not seek food that parishes but that which lasts forever and gives eternal life!"

And Jesus says, in one of the most famous and great passages of the 4th Gospel and the whole NT, "I am the Bread of Life."

What might he have meant? Well, bread sustains life, without it we cannot go on… But life is also more than just physical existence… REAL life is a relationship with God, a relationship of love & trust (like that of our great ancestor the wandering Aramean) … And our present relationship with God was made possible by Jesus, the bread of life. Without Jesus, we may exist, but we are not alive! True life involves our acceptance and love of Jesus and sharing that with those around us, with the aliens and those in need.

So, on this Thanksgiving, we are called to be thankful for the wondrous gifts we have received, for the wondrous gifts we've yet to behold… knowing that our God wants us to share whatever we have with those around us. "Without cost you have received, without cost you must give" (Mathew 10.8).
Let's all be thankful …and let's all be giving… and let's make this a wonderful Thanksgiving! ✝