

The Taste Berry of Gratitude
(Rev. Dr. John Bartol)

In Africa, there is a fruit called the taste berry. It changes a person's taste so that everything he or she eats will taste sweet and pleasant for hours afterwards. The spirit of gratitude can and should be our 'taste berry.' It can sweeten sorrows, disappointments and trials with songs of praise and thanksgiving.

Ingratitude makes one ignorant to the plight of those who do not enjoy the blessings of the privileged few. Thanklessness is thoughtlessness; it makes us indifferent and aloof when we ought to be concerned and involved. The thankless person becomes the centre of his or her little world where self alone is worshipped. Ingratitude is a sin of indifference, which takes everything for granted: three square meals a day, fresh water and a place to sleep.

If you have food in your refrigerator, clothes to wear and a roof overhead, you are richer than 70 per cent of the world's population.

If you have money in the bank and enough in your wallet to cover a meal out with your family, you are among the top nine per cent of the world's wealthy.

If you can attend church or even vote without fear of harassment or loss of freedom, you are more blessed than two billion people in the world.

Do you ever complain about health care in Canada? Perhaps one time you had to wait awhile for a medical appointment. Would you rather live in parts of India where there is only one doctor for 126,000 people? Or in a country where every year 1.8 million die from cholera, dysentery and typhoid because of unsafe drinking water? Ninety per cent of these deaths are children. We are told that the average Canadian eats 3,180 calories a day while 800 million in some Third World countries suffer from acute hunger and malnutrition.

If you have never experienced the daily fear of war, the loneliness of imprisonment or the agony of torture, you are better off than 700 million others.

If you can read this article, you are more blessed than two billion people who cannot read at all.

What should be our reaction toward these sobering facts? Should we feel guilty or even ashamed that we have so much, and others have so little? No, because I think the Bible teaches a different response.

Let's start by giving thanks for all our blessings. "Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the Lord O my soul, and forget not all his benefits," (Psalm 103:1, 2 NIV). Then with hearts full of wonder, love and praise, let us show our thankfulness by habitually sharing our blessings with those less fortunate. True gratitude can change a life of selfishness to one of happiness. So today, let us start eating the taste berry of gratitude.

"Thou hast given so much to me. Give one thing more - a grateful heart." George Herbert