

We should be thankful there are times during the year when the calendar encourages us to change our daily routines and focus our attention. There's Christmas when we can look forward to giving and getting presents. New Years is a time to celebrate the birth of a new year. Veterans Day is when we stop to think about and honor people in the military who fought and maybe even died defending the values and beliefs dear to our country.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, we celebrate the beginning of the United States Of America. And there is a special day, every year, that's all about you or me, it's the day the entire world can celebrate us...our birthday. Soon, another special day is coming, Turkey Day, the day we are encouraged to think about what in our lives we are thankful for. A day called Thanks-giving. This is the day the calendar tells us we should stop and give thanks, a day we should be thankful.

I bet, for most of us, every year, we think of the same things to be thankful for. What are some of those things, name them out-loud...Food, family, friends, home, the Fellowship.

This year, I'd like to suggest there are probably a zillion other things to be thankful for. These are the things we probably don't notice or don't think much about. These are things I sometimes like to call gifts from the angels (but don't tell anyone, because a lot of people don't believe in angels). Other people might say they are gifts from God, or gifts from the universe. While other people might simply say it's just luck.

For me, a gift from the angels is when I'm out in my yard and I look up and see a gorgeous hawk soaring in the sky, it looks like it's just up there floating, not flapping it's wings, but still traveling pretty fast and soon it's out of sight.

That's when I smile, take a deep breath and say thank you. Thank you for the gift of getting to see such a beautiful site. Maybe it was just luck to be in the right place, at the right time, to see that beautiful hawk. But I like to think it was a special gift to me, and I wonder if maybe it came from an angel. I don't really know if there are angels or not, but at times like that, I can't help but wonder.

Then there are times when I have to go to an event or a meeting that I don't really want to be at but I have to go anyway. Sometimes, not always, sometimes, the meeting or event is pretty boring. But, sometimes, I learn something new and exciting or meet someone I think is really interesting and I have a good time. Those are also times when I wonder if I hadn't just been given a gift from the angels or from the universe.

Often, these kinds of gifts are little things, but things that can brighten my entire day. Sometimes they can be big things like when I make a life-long friend, just because I was in the right place at the right time...or maybe, just maybe, that friend was a special gift to me.

I bet I'm not the only one that has these kinds of things happen in my life. I bet I'm not the only one who has things happen that some people might call a "coincidence" or just plain luck; things that seem to come out of the blue, but makes you smile or makes you happy.

For example, you have a quiz or a test the next day and you haven't studied enough, it snows overnight and school is closed, giving you one more day to study. That snow-day might be a gift from the universe, or from an angel, or God, or maybe its just a coincidence. When things like that happen in our lives, I think we should take the time to be thankful, regardless of where they come from.

I wonder how many of us even recognize the many gifts that we are given? When we think of things as being a coincidence or think things happen because of good luck or bad luck, we probably won't see them as a gift. And if we don't see something as a gift, we probably won't think to be thankful.

It's important to understand that not all gifts can be called nice or good. We may not like some of the gifts we are given. Some gifts may not make us happy but could still be good for us. I remember a time when I was driving my car, not paying a lot of attention to the road and the cars around me. I was lost in thought, thinking about something that was bothering me. Most of my attention was on the on the problem I was thinking about.

All of a sudden I notice the car in front of me had come to a dead stop. I had to slam on my brakes so I didn't hit it and have an accident. After I realized I was safe, and the people in the car in front of me were safe, I said a silent "thank you". I was thankful that something or someone was reminding me to pay attention.

I think we are all given these kinds of gifts. Some gifts are big gifts and some gifts are small. Some gifts make us smile and other gifts can be unsettling.

It's good that we have a day on the calendar, every year, that reminds us to be thankful; a day we are asked to pay special attention to all the good things in our lives. I think we benefit when we pay attention to the gifts we've been given, not only on Thanksgiving Day, but thankful for the every-day kind of gifts—both those we like and those that may unsettle us.

And you know what? I don't know that it matters if we think of gifts as coming from an angel, the universe, God or just plain luck. I think what's important is for us to notice the gifts we are given and to be grateful. There are many things for us to be thankful for on this Thanksgiving Day, and on any and every day too.

So, between now and Thanksgiving Day, lets practice being thankful, every day. Lets start right here and now.

And may it be so.