

## Simply One Page-Gratitude and Forgiveness

This piece was created from my own reflections and vision. I used ChatGPT as a tool to help shape the text from my original concepts and structure. The final form is the result of thoughtful revision and my own editorial hand. Mike Haddorff-2519

When I was in the working world as a business owner, Thanksgiving weekend was always my favorite holiday. It began with that perfect meal: roast turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, creamed onions, and, in more recent years, roasted Brussels sprouts, topped off with a touch of cranberry sauce. (A side note: I've always loved that sauce, but only last year did I discover why. It must be the Swedish in me. More on that another time.)

And then, of course, dessert. Pumpkin pie if you must, but if you're lucky, pecan pie. Always the pecan. Warm, with a scoop of vanilla ice cream melting down the sides, not great for the belt line, but wonderful for the soul.

The beauty of Thanksgiving isn't just the meal; it's what follows. A full stomach, a free Friday, and a weekend without obligation. Sure, the retail world has wiggled in renaming it "Black Friday," but I've managed to steer clear of that rush. I've always seen it instead as a long exhale, a space to rest and reflect.

Over the years, I've come to see that Thanksgiving's real power lies in two intertwined words: **gratitude and forgiveness**. Gratitude feels easy when life is good, when the harvest is plentiful, the table is full, and everyone seems to get along. But life, as I've learned, is always mixed. There are seasons of joy and seasons of heartbreak. I've known both, and I've played both parts: the one who wounds and the one who's been wounded.

Because of that, I've learned something important. Gratitude without forgiveness doesn't last. It becomes thin and polite. And forgiveness without gratitude feels hollow, like work without joy. These two belong together: two sides of the same coin.

I can't truly give thanks while holding onto resentment.  
And I can't truly forgive until I remember how much I've already been given.

So this Thanksgiving, as I enjoy that warm slice of pecan pie (with ice cream, of course), I'll pause to give thanks, and to let go. Because in the end, both are part of the same grace.

### Reflection

Where do gratitude and forgiveness meet in your life right now?