

“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.”

Good morning, everybody! Either today or yesterday, many of you have come to school with fruit. Surely you know, but just as a reminder—this fruit will be given to people who are in retirement homes or in homes for the mentally impaired, or in homes for the blind. Students at our school do this every year when we hold “Thanksgiving Worship”, but do you know the reason why we do this?

Maybe some of you are thinking, “because the teachers told us to!” Well, maybe that’s true for some people... But today, I want us to think about a more serious reason. I want us to think about *why* giving things away is important.

According to both Christianity and Judaism, when we give things away, we are really giving things *back*. That probably sounds strange at first. But Christians and Jewish people both believe what today’s verse from Psalms says, “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it.” We believe that everything in the world is fundamentally God’s, not humans’.

In other words, fundamentally speaking, you and I *don’t own anything*. You and I are *borrowing* everything we have. This land we’re standing on is not Kanto Gakuin’s land—it’s land Kanto Gakuin is *borrowing* from God. The wood for this platform that I’m standing on is not my wood, or the school’s, it has been borrowed from God. It’s *God’s* wood. The clothes you and I are wearing are not fundamentally ours, they’re God’s. The houses we live in, the food we ate this morning, the money we have in our pockets—fundamentally, all of these are God’s things—not ours.

You may think that this way of thinking is strange, but it actually helps us do two very important things: (1) First, it **helps us to be thankful for what we have**, and, (2) second, it **helps us to be generous**.

It’s fall-time now, and the farmers all over Japan are taking in their crops. Maybe some of you have relatives who are farmers. We Christians believe that these crops are not the farmers’ crops. Actually, they’re God’s crops. The earth they grew in is God’s, the farmers’ knowledge is knowledge that God gave them. So fundamentally, the harvest is a gift from God. So it’s only natural for us to be thankful for the harvest.

For the same reason, it’s only natural for us to say just what all of you say before you eat, “itadakimasu”—“I humbly receive this...” That’s a wonderful Japanese tradition! It can help remind us that our food is a gift...

When we realize that all we have is God's, it becomes more difficult to waste things, I think. When we realize that our food is a gift—a gift that some people do not receive—it becomes more difficult to throw away half of our meal or to buy far more than we need.

But also, when we realize that all we have is really God's, it's easier to give what we have away. It's not ours, anyway, right?

Maybe most of you know this, but Christians have a practice of giving away 10% of their income to either the church or charity. For non-Christians, this may seem hard. But there are probably a number of teachers standing around you in this room that do just this. Maybe some of your parents do this. It's not hard—it's not hard when you realize that *what you have is not yours anyway*.

If I see 10,000 yen in my wallet, and I realize that it's not really mine anyway, it's not hard to think of giving 1000 yen of it away for the sake of other people, right?

When we truly realize that everything we have is a gift, we become better people. We become more thankful, more careful, and more generous.

So in this beautiful fall season, I encourage you to think about your own life one more time and to realize how fortunate you are.

Compared to most of the other people in the world you and I have lots of things. Right now, around the world, approximately 15 million people are living as refugees. Most of us live in a safe, comfortable house or apartment. We've never been forced to move because of political trouble or natural disaster!

According to UNICEF, in South Asia, around 60% of students your age do not have access to education. But you get to attend a *private* school. Right now, 50 million people around the world do not have enough food. Most of us eat whatever we want, whenever we feel like it, and throw the extra away.

So on this day of Thanksgiving Worship, let's take a second look at our lives. Let's take a moment to be quiet, and to say a prayer of thanks for all the things we are borrowing from God. Let's remember that these are not our things. God is letting us borrow them, so that we can use them for the good of others. Let's be more generous. Let's be more caring. It all starts by being more thankful. Let's pray.

Loving God,

The earth is yours, and all that live upon it.

Everything is yours.

We thank you that you've let us borrow so many of your good things.

With deep humility and gratitude, teach us to use what has been entrusted to us more wisely,
for the good of all your children.

You are a generous God.

Help each one of us to become more generous people,

We ask in Jesus name, Amen.