

Zion's UCC of Taborton
November 19, 2017
Rev. Konrad Raup

Gemutlichkeit

Gemutlichkeit is a German word that doesn't translate very easily into English as a single word. There's no single English word that conveys its whole meaning. Generally, it's defined as "coziness", but it also implies "contentedness" "Comfort" and "relaxation" with elements of "cordiality" and "friendliness". That's a lot for just one word.

Gemutlichkeit encompasses all the senses. You feel it, you see it, you hear it, you can even taste and smell it. Think of those Thomas Kincade paintings that so often show up on Christmas cards. Those snow covered scenes where a golden light pours out of the windows of the buildings. You can almost feel the peace.

Most of us have probably had a gemutlichkeit moment in our lives- a time when we felt entirely happy and content. But, it probably didn't last long. The world has a way of breaking into these times. You may even have memories of that time triggered by a bit of music, a word, or a smell.

For me, it is the smell of apple pie and coffee. Those two odors can transport me to back to my grandmother Raup's kitchen when I was about 5 or 6. My grandmother lived with her sister Minnie in the other half of our 2 family house in Stuyvesant down in Columbia County. She was about 4 foot 11, and weighed about 90 pounds dripping wet.

Hospitality was her forte. From dawn to late evening, there was always a pot of coffee on the stove, and there was always an apple pie or two to lure visitors in for a longer stay. In the evenings her children and grandchildren, and even some great grandchildren would gather in her kitchen for more pie and coffee. It was a time of gemutlichkeit. I was just a small child, but I felt safe, cozy, contented, comforted, relaxed, cordial and friendly. The warmth and aroma of that kitchen was like incense in a Church.

It didn't last long. My grandmother had a stroke soon after and went to live with my aunt, but the smell of coffee and apple pie can still transport me back to being a 6 year old in my own Eden.

We should be aware of these times of gemutlichkeit because they represent the best of us. Even when life has been difficult and relationships have been strained, there are moments when it all works. That was the whole premise of the musical Camelot. "For one brief shining moment" we actually got it right.

I would bet dollars to donuts that many of the children of this congregation are not only developing gemutlichkeit moments in their families, they are making them in things like this church's turkey dinner, and the Summer festival, the Christmas bazaar and other such activities in our church community. At least I sincerely hope that we are creating times where our children feel safe, and relaxed and comfortable. Places where bickering is minimized and everyone feels welcome and appreciated.

These moments are priceless, aren't they? It is what the psalmist was lauding in our first reading today. Times of celebration and joy, praise and thanks. It is what I imagine the kingdom of God to be- an eternal time of gemutlichkeit that delights all of our senses.

Yet our gospel reading today reminds us that we often forget that it is God's spirit, alive throughout all of creation, that fuels these moments. Ten were healed, but only one gave thanks. We are guilty of that as well. If things go bad, we turn to God. But, when things are going good, we like to take the credit for ourselves. But, by doing that, we miss a great opportunity to build that new heaven and new earth that Jesus said is to be our inheritance. The everlasting gemutlichkeit.

So, my prayer for all of us this Thanksgiving Sunday is twofold. First, I pray that this holiday season will contain moments of gemutlichkeit; moments when love of God, the peace of Christ, and the unity of the Holy Spirit will give us a glimpse of what awaits us. But I also pray that we will recognize the source of this warmth, and love, and coziness and that we will give thanks to God for walking with us in the good times as well as the bad. Have a wonderful Thanksgiving.