

BeefTalk: The Cows Say Thank You and So Should We



Thank You!

Our joy of thanksgiving for all that we have and our anticipated joy of deepening our understanding of life really come together at this time.

What does it mean to say thank you? Sometimes the ability to say it is not easy. Some quickly would say that's ridiculous. However, we all probably could agree that people are different in how they express their feelings and emotions.

That would include how we express our appreciation. Welcome to the seasonal time of the year as we walk through Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas and New Year's Day. How can we be so lucky as to have such a great lineup of opportunities to appreciate all that we have?

Of course, the cows don't put dates on calendars, but they do seem to know that survival in the winter is a team affair.

Summer grazing is perhaps somewhat taken for granted and assumed, but a pickup loaded with cow cake is certainly noticed. Even without the cake, a tractor inching its way across the cold, barren lands of winter brings us some happy cows.

The cows are thankful in their own way. Some would reference their attitude as a reflection on contentment. Perhaps a stable is a peaceful thought for the cows. The look and smell of the stable would penetrate the world's fast pace, as does the musty smell of decaying straw among freshly fed Timothy hay and alfalfa.

The pigeons cluster under the eaves as they compete for space and rest. A mouse or two may scamper from manger to manger trying to avoid the ever-present cat. The larger animals, passing time between feedings, are quietly rechewing the evening meal and trying to get comfortable.

The howling of a coyote reminds all the animals to be aware of what lurks in the dark as the coyotes wait for a critter to leave the peace and safety of the stable. The stable gives the animals contentment and a sense of security, plus the ever-present essence of living thankfulness. The cows also are thankful in their own way.

We also are given the opportunity to express our thankfulness for all that we have and all that is waiting for us in the future. We contemplate the greater mystery, that of life, and then feel a need to continue to deepen our understanding of what is to come.

Our joy of thanksgiving for all that we have and our anticipated joy of deepening our understanding of life really come together at this time. Daily, one can see the evidence of thanks in the news. People who have experienced disruptions in their lives, people who may have feared for their lives, are quick to express thanks.

Not long ago, Derrik Sweeney, Gregory Porter and Luke Gates, the three young American students who were arrested and held as prisoners in Egypt but eventually released, returned home. Students, parents and everyone else were thankful for the safe outcome. Who would have guessed that one day, they were experiencing an international student program, but moments later were not even certain if they would live through another day. For that, we can give thanks and remind ourselves that things do change and sometimes we don't have the control that we would like.

After attending a conference and walking the streets, the homeless who are less fortunate were there on the streets as well. I offered my coffee to a homeless man who was thankful for the gift. In humility, I was reminded of all that I have to be thankful for. I quickly realized that being thankful is not something limited to those who are perceived to have more. Being thankful is something we should express. We should be thankful for the things that we have and for the things we don't.

Looking ahead, we each have a plan. It is a plan that entwines with all of those around us. How we will fit and be woven into tomorrow's daily living quilt is not known, so we should give thanks that we are here today with fresh joys of thanksgiving and the anticipated joy of deepening our relationship with the mysteries that we do not understand.

We must keep watch and prepare constantly, even though we have so much to be thankful for. Perhaps that is what is tugging at us this weekend. It is a weekend of great gratitude, yet realizing that we must always be prepared for the gift that is greater than any fathomable gift or experience here on Earth.

We need to settle our busyness. We need to avoid being lost in all these things that we are so thankful for. We must realize that our greatest gift has not even arrived. So for now, let's all gather at the stable. If nothing else, let us breathe in that contentment the stable brings. Even the cows know that. While giving thanks, it is peace that we all seek.

May you find it this weekend, and may you find all your ear tags