I'd like to take you along on my Tuesday morning walk. This week it was my think about the Thanksgiving sermon walk. The quote "walk three or five or even six times a week. Still there are often surprises. Like the bird I could not see but whose song reminded me how God loves diversity, this song like no Other I had ever heard.

Ahead I saw two old friends, the ducks that live in the little pond on Lakeland street. Though it is full of algae and water that no amount of this would ever make me want to drink, my two friends plunged their bright green heads into that water, their tails dancing a hymn of praise to God as they fed on the bounty he had provided. In their enthusiasm they are more of a Thanksgiving sermon than I will ever preach.

After a bit, I passed the house of the man who will never speak. My age, a little younger, my good mornings are met with a response that might make me think he is deaf and blind, though he most certainly is not. I wonder why his world will not stretch to include me.

Murray Ridge, the school bus says on the side. Every day its lights flash red on Ridgedale. As I pass I see the mother wheel her handicapped child to the bus, up onto the lift, then after that mechanical platform has done its work, she and the driver strap the wheelchair into its place.

Today as I pass the windows of that bus, faces I have seen in every town I have been in stare at me, their eyes search me to see whether I am one of the friendly or hostile ones. So ready to smile. So used to stares.

I am thankful, I think as I have passed the bus, thankful for the mother who in rain or cold takes her child out to the bus each morning, for her love, for her not being ashamed of her severely handicapped child.

I am thankful for that bus driver, and that bus, and all the people those who who work at Murray Ridge and support that school with their taxes that the mentally handicapped might know smiles and learning and help.

Another bus will soon come down that street, Avon Public schools it will
Along the street I greet the children who wait. First there is the girl in my daughter's class. Hello Mr. Schlessman she calls, just coming out the door. After I have gone to the end of the culdesac and am returning, I greet her again. What is the cup for, I ask. It looks like a coffee cup to me, though I can't imagine a fifth grader being sent off to school with morning coffee in hand. It's for my bus driver, comes the explanation. Each day I bring her a cup of coffee, each evening she returns the empty cup on my way home.

I like that. A daily gift.

Hello I said, but he never looked up. Don't talk to strangers I could read in his mind. What kind of a world is this where we must teach our children that.

Thanksgiving 1987. What shall I preach? You ought to be more thankful? We all already know that.

St. Paul wrote: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work.

Who were the bountiful sowers? That mother and the bus driver. The many times I have walked by them there I have felt what they share. Morning and night in those few moments of loading and unloading they have become friends. A word here, a smile there and they are not alone. In serving the one in need together they give and receive so very much.

Or there is the girl with the coffee cup. How proud she was to be able to give. What would she get back? Simply thanks, and a smile. A bountiful harvest.

Some of us are bountiful sowers. We see the seed and throw out all we can for all we can think about is the gigantic harvest that we one day be. Others of us see that seed and think of all the bad things that might
happen. And we are stingy with our words and our deeds and our gifts. And life proves us wise, for there is never much harvest. The fearful boy, the man who would not speak.

Why did God give us life? That we might treat each day as grim duty? That we might hang on to everything as if everything we let our neighbor have will be lost? No. God gave us life for us to enjoy it.

Do you know what I thought as I walked by my ducks? I am glad you did not fly south yet. Otherwise maybe one of you or both of you would no longer be. Some hunter might have you as the prize for his table. Enjoy your food. Death will come soon enough.

So it is with us also. Death will come soon enough. No amount of worry or safety will hold it off forever. One day the mother's child will die, and she will have plenty of mornings to stay in her warm house and not face the wind and the cold.

One day the girl who spoke and the boy who did not speak will come to the end of this life. The girl who sowed joy and enthusiasm will have few regrets. But what of the boy too afraid to speak?

Thanksgiving. Paul says that bountiful sowers increase the thanksgiving. Give and people will thank God for you. "You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God, for the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints, but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God." Paul was writing to the Corinthians, encouraging them to give for those who were in need in Jerusalem. Give, and we will give thanks to God.

So it is today. I give thanks for a woman, and a girl. And for one other sight I saw on my walk.

Near the end of my walk, I looked above the trees and saw the steeple of Holy Trinity Catholic Church. On the top was the cross.

For everyone and everything I saw on my walk this is the sign of hope.

Hunters shoot the first ducks, the mentally handicapped are made fun of, someday
someone will probably take advantage of the girl who gives, asking so little in return, and stranger harm little children. It's that kind of world.

But God has given the life of his son that when we have all come to the end of our walk through this life, he will bring us to his pond, where we shall float and fly and feed and frolic. And praise God for life, and love. Forever.