

171. HARVEST BONFIRE - MONDAY - OCTOBER 26, 2026

Good morning, Grace Harbor – it's Dan. Happy Monday, and happy National Pumpkin Day!

Are you a fan of pumpkin? I've actually got pumpkin spice flavor in my coffee this morning as I record this!

I did a little research, and did you know that pumpkins are one of the oldest domesticated plants in the world? Domesticated means that they don't just grow in the wild, but that people intentionally plant them. The earliest evidence for domesticated pumpkins was found in Mexico and dates back anywhere from 8,000 to almost 10,000 years ago!

And long before it was a trendy flavor, pumpkins were already associated with autumn. This is in large part because they're a type of winter squash and are ready to harvest in the fall – like the squash at the farm last month! But also, because of their outer shell, they can keep through the winter, providing a tasty and nutritious ingredient during a season when not much might grow.

And, of course, with Halloween coming up this weekend, you can't forget jack-o'-lanterns! We can thank Irish immigrants for that! They already had a tradition of carving vegetables in Ireland, using smaller veggies like potatoes and turnips. But, when they saw the round orange native of North America, they found not only a bigger canvas, but something much easier to carve!

Hey, speaking of things coming up this weekend, here in Grace Harbor we have our big annual Harvest Bonfire! It's one of our longest standing traditions. I got curious one year and asked Mrs. Rodriguez when it got started. She keeps the town's historical records at the library, and she told me that the earliest reference to it in print was in a newspaper from the early 1800s. But even then, it sounds like a tradition that had already been around a while.

My guess is it's something that happened spontaneously one year, and everyone loved it, so they kept it going. You see, it's not an overly organized event, unlike the Christmas Tree Lighting coming up in early December. Instead, what happens is we build a big bonfire out of logs donated by the community. Each family is invited to contribute a log, and then we enjoy the warmth generated by everyone's generosity together.

A few other things have been added over the years, like hot apple cider, s'mores, a country band for square dancing, and for at least the last ten years, Ted has been bringing his tractor down from the farm to do hay rides around the Village Green.

The whole thing is technically run by the team from Parks & Rec, but everyone knows who's really in charge... of the fire, at least. It's Mr. Rutherford! He claims his expertise as a wood carver makes him the safest and best choice.

We had our own small fire going in our fire pit last night, and I mentioned that we needed to save a log or two for

the event. My daughter spoke up and said, "Well, I want to give something."

"You are, honey," I replied. "The logs will be from all of us."

"Yeah, but that's not really *from* me. *You* got that wood. Could you maybe help me cut a limb off one of the trees this week?" she asked.

"Unfortunately, that won't work," I told her. "For something like this, you need to use dry wood, and it takes much longer than a few days to dry out. It's ok. Everyone is welcome whether they bring a log or not. And you know, they're also doing a collection for the food pantry. You could bring one of our canned goods."

"No, that wouldn't be from me *either*," she said, looking annoyed.

The conversation changed topics from there, but I know my daughter, and that is *not* the end of it. She's smart, she's persistent, and she likes to problem solve. So, I'm really interested to see what she comes up with.

That conversation also got me thinking about the topic of generosity, and I thought we could make it our focus this week. In my church tradition, we've learned a lot from a guy named John Wesley who lived way back in the 1700s.

When he taught about generosity, and specifically around money, he taught three basic rules: earn all you can, save

all you can, and give all you can.

But I also realized, we're kind of applying those rules with the bonfire in a way. In order to contribute a log, we needed to get some firewood – whether we cut it ourselves or buy it. Then, we needed to save it – hold onto it, not forever, but for the time when it was ready and needed. And now, we have the chance to give it.

I wonder if you have anything that you've been saving that you could now give to others. Are there any toys or clothes that you've loved and are ready to let someone else enjoy? Do you have a secret family recipe that makes something really tasty that you could make and share with others? When you think of something, go ahead and share it now. If you need more time, feel free to pause the podcast, and I'll be right here when you get back.

[PAUSE]

Ok, let's close in prayer. If you want to, you can close your eyes and fold your hands.

Dear God, we thank you for pumpkins and bonfires and all the things we love about the fall. This is a season when we're often invited to be thankful, and that always starts with you. May we be generous with others because we recognize you were first generous with us. Amen.

Ok, Grace Harbor, have a great Monday, and I'll catch you tomorrow!

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