

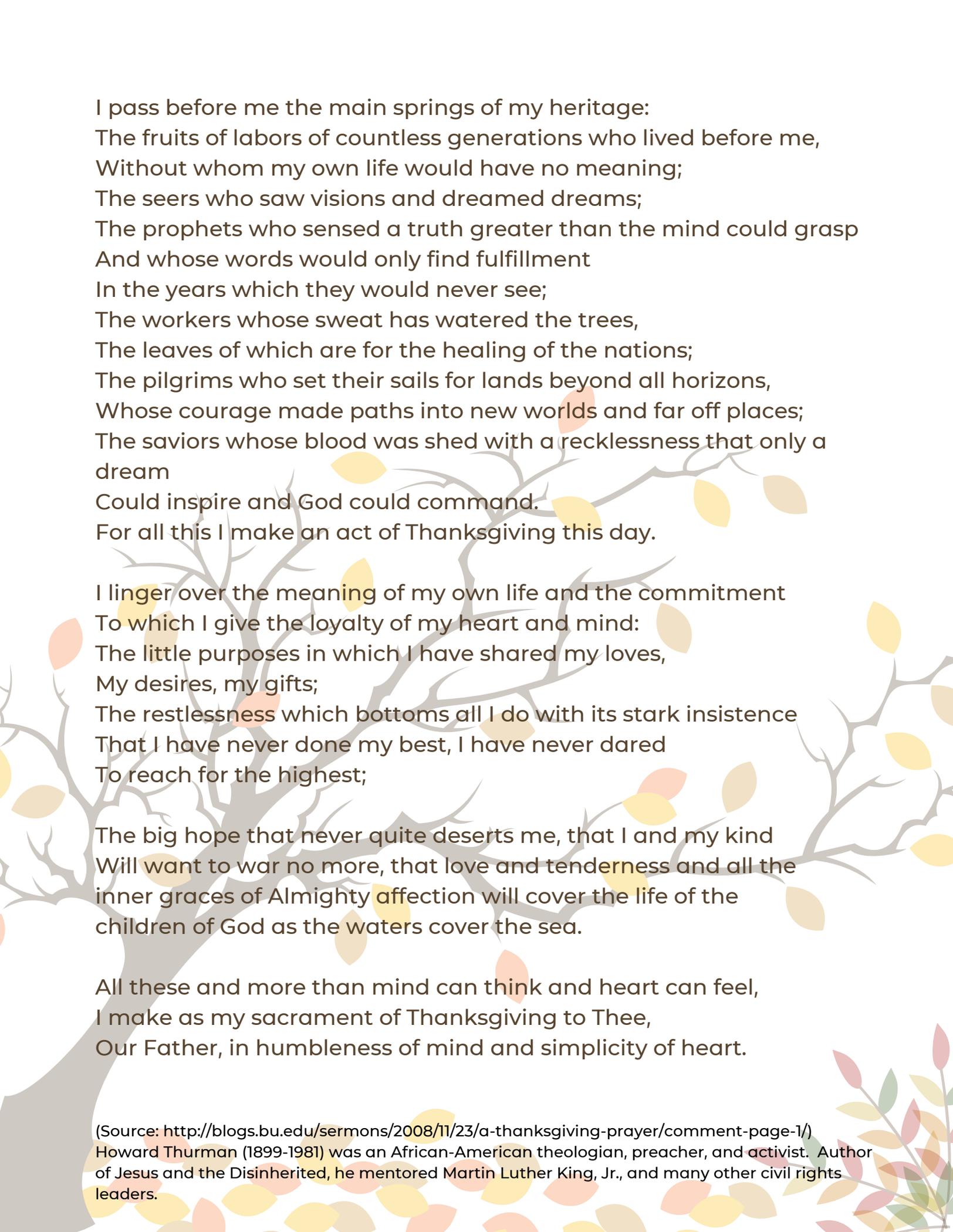
A Thanksgiving Prayer

Howard Thurman

Today, I make my Sacrament of Thanksgiving.
I begin with the simple things of my days:
Fresh air to breathe,
Cool water to drink,
The taste of food,
The protection of houses and clothes,
The comforts of home.
For all these I make an act of Thanksgiving this day!

I bring to mind all the warmth of humankind that I have known:
My mother's arms,
The strength of my father
The playmates of my childhood,
The wonderful stories brought to me from the lives
Of many who talked of days gone by when fairies
And giants and all kinds of magic held sway;
The tears I have shed, the tears I have seen;
The excitement of laughter and the twinkle in the
Eye with its reminder that life is good.
For all these I make an act of Thanksgiving this day!

I finger one by one the messages of hope that awaited me at the
crossroads:
The smile of approval from those who held in their hands the reins
of my security;
The tightening of the grip in a simple handshake when I
Feared the step before me in darkness;
The whisper in my heart when the temptation was fiercest
And the claims of appetite were not to be denied;
The crucial word said, the simple sentence from an open
Page when my decision hung in the balance.
For all these I make an act of Thanksgiving this day!



I pass before me the main springs of my heritage:
The fruits of labors of countless generations who lived before me,
Without whom my own life would have no meaning;
The seers who saw visions and dreamed dreams;
The prophets who sensed a truth greater than the mind could grasp
And whose words would only find fulfillment
In the years which they would never see;
The workers whose sweat has watered the trees,
The leaves of which are for the healing of the nations;
The pilgrims who set their sails for lands beyond all horizons,
Whose courage made paths into new worlds and far off places;
The saviors whose blood was shed with a recklessness that only a
dream
Could inspire and God could command.
For all this I make an act of Thanksgiving this day.

I linger over the meaning of my own life and the commitment
To which I give the loyalty of my heart and mind:
The little purposes in which I have shared my loves,
My desires, my gifts;
The restlessness which bottoms all I do with its stark insistence
That I have never done my best, I have never dared
To reach for the highest;

The big hope that never quite deserts me, that I and my kind
Will want to war no more, that love and tenderness and all the
inner graces of Almighty affection will cover the life of the
children of God as the waters cover the sea.

All these and more than mind can think and heart can feel,
I make as my sacrament of Thanksgiving to Thee,
Our Father, in humbleness of mind and simplicity of heart.

(Source: <http://blogs.bu.edu/sermons/2008/11/23/a-thanksgiving-prayer/comment-page-1/>)
Howard Thurman (1899-1981) was an African-American theologian, preacher, and activist. Author
of *Jesus and the Disinherited*, he mentored Martin Luther King, Jr., and many other civil rights
leaders.