

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Thanksgiving, November 22, 2018

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 567, 571:5, 575, 570:1-5, 570, 6-8.

Lessons: Deuteronomy 8:10-18, Philippians 4:6-20, Matthew 6:24-34.

Sermon Text: Psalm 100

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Don't we all know about Thanksgiving Day in our country? We have learned that some of the first European settlers joined with Native Americans and gave thanks to God for providing them with food and a place to live, a place where they had freedom to worship God without every aspect of their worship being regulated by government or by some other humans. We know that presidents usually make some kind of proclamation about a day of national thanksgiving. We see how even in Mankato, people of different religions get together to celebrate Thanksgiving Day in some kind of worship service.

We also know and realize how we have been blessed with material things. Just remember the words of the First Article in which Luther tells us about how our God preserves us, "by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, property and home, spouse and children, land, cattle, and all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life. God also preserves me by defending me against all danger, guarding and protecting me from all evil. All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserved it. For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him."

Many Americans are celebrating today with "thanks". We, too, want to give thanks. But you, as one who has come to know of God's great love, have some special reasons to get together today with fellow confessors of Christ. We are here to

GIVE THANKS TO GOD AND PRAISE HIS NAME

- 1. We thank God today,**
- 2. And rejoice in his blessings!**

We don't have to be here today. We are gathered here with joy and thankfulness in our hearts to celebrate. "*Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.*" Psalm 100:1-5 (KJV)

The Old Testament, God's commands in the law, and especially God's ceremonial laws about the worship activities of his chosen people were intended to point forward to Jesus Christ. The New Testament makes that clear with these words: "*Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.*" Colossians 2:16-17 (NIV)

Today we find these words encouraging us: "*Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*" Hebrews 10:23-25 (NIV) God has been faithful in providing all the things we need. And so we gather not only to worship but to encourage one another.

He tells us today: ***“Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”***

Look at all that the Lord God has blessed us with! When did you last go hungry because you had no food? When did you not have a roof over your head? Hasn't God kept his promises in Matthew 6, where Jesus says ***“seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well”*** Matthew 6:33 (NIV)? In our Gospel lesson, you heard those promises to provide food, clothing and shelter.

And what do you think would happen if you did not seek God's righteousness first? When it rains, does it only rain on your crops and garden and not on your neighbor's? When the sun shines, does it only shine on your home and land and not your neighbor's? So how do we explain this? Well, ***“He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”*** Matthew 5:45 (NIV)

This is God's goodness, his grace. He even measures the days of a person's life, to give them a time of grace, a time to come to faith in him and to do his work on earth. ***“For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”*** Although we may not want to be faithful to him, his mercy endureth forever. But you want to seek God's righteousness first in your lives.

God continues to give and offer his blessings to all mankind – earthly, material blessings and spiritual blessings. It is for all these things that we thank God today and every day.

However, more important than material blessings are the spiritual blessings God has given us. He has made us members of his kingdom. That means we have been brought under his rule in the Holy Christian Church. He has preserved the true Gospel of our Lord and Savior to us. This is an important blessing! While much of the world and many of the churches in our land have lost this blessing of the true Gospel of Christ, we still enjoy it freely and bountifully. We can still hear the message of what God has done for us in Christ, namely ***“that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them,”*** 2 Corinthians 5:19 (NIV) There is no greater blessing than to know Jesus as our Savior and to trust in him for salvation. Today we join our fellow believers in saying, ***“Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.”*** Psalm 105:1-2 (NIV)

You have received many blessings. We can easily find others who do not have all the material blessings we have received. But don't just share or think of sharing only on Thanksgiving Day. We can help those less fortunate anytime.

Especially when it comes to spiritual blessings, God has also given you the command and opportunities to share those spiritual blessings.

You have learned about the forgiveness of sins, earned for all mankind when Jesus suffered and died. You receive the assurance of the forgiveness of your sins, publicly in our worship services, and you heard again today that ***“Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy upon us and has given His only Son to die for us and for His sake forgives us all our sins. To them that believe on His name, he gives power to become the sons of God and has promised them His Holy Spirit. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”***

God provides other spiritual blessings, too. These include the knowledge that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior, the assurance of faith that I am justified before God through Christ, peace with God, the hope of heaven, the witness that I am a child of God, comfort in all tribulation, confidence to pray, and all blessedness which Jesus Christ my Lord obtained for me.

He offers the Gospel to all men. He has given all this to you, and you are to share it, to give it away. God has even given you the command to share that message: ***“go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always.”*** Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV) We find that command in Mark's gospel in these words: ***“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*** Mark 16:15 (NIV) And listen to Paul: ***“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.”*** 2 Corinthians 5:19-20 (NIV)

What are you going to do about it? First: ***“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.”***

Sing and make music in your hearts. Scripture says we are to ***“Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** Ephesians 5:18-20 (NIV)

Singing? What if you think you don't have a great singing voice? God doesn't care if you don't sing on key. But you can still sing. Don't be afraid to sing. You are singing to praise God, not singing to impress people sitting around you. Men, if the music is too high to sing comfortably, you can even sing an octave lower when you sing. One thing that visitors have often commented on is that we are a singing church!

“Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture” Luther teaches us in his explanation of the First Article: “I believe that God created me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my mind and all my abilities. And I believe that God still preserves me.”

Not only will you praise God for what he's done for you, you will also want to share those blessings.

What opportunities do you have to share and to give away that good news of your salvation? Well, you know those better than I can tell you. Your whole lives, all your activities, your words, show and tell others what you believe and confess, and are a witness for Jesus Christ and all that God has done for you.

The fact that you are here now is witness to others. You aren't just using this holiday to travel or only to have a special meal with family or friends.

So, today remember that the true God is our God. We ***“Know that the LORD is God.”*** You came here into the presence of God with your fellow Christians to ***“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.”*** You are here to ***“give thanks to him and praise his name.”***

You know that God gives daily bread indeed without our asking, even to all the wicked; and he has led you to appreciate, and to receive with thanksgiving, your daily bread – and not just daily food, but everything that you need for your bodily welfare!

So let us ***“give thanks to [God] and praise his name”*** today, tomorrow and every day.

And you know why: ***“For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”*** ***“For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.”*** Amen.