

Thanksgiving – 2019

"Thankful for Every Word"

Text: Deuteronomy 8:1-10

Grace, mercy and peace – certainly three of God's greatest gifts for which we do well to give thanks – may these three gifts be multiplied to each of you as you give thanks to your Savior God for his innumerable blessings on this Thanksgiving Eve. Amen.

Dear Fellow Recipients of God's unlimited generosity:

Human beings regularly fish for gratitude. They bait their hook with the "why" and dangle it in front of the recipient of their generosity or service. *"I'm glad you seem to like the meal. It took me all day to prepare it." (Insert words of gratitude here) "Oh, by the way, I changed the oil in your car yesterday and reset the service engine light." (Insert words of gratitude here) "Mommy, did you like the picture I colored for you?" (Insert words of gratitude here)*

Why do we do that? Because from little on we share an almost universal need to be appreciated. Human beings can bear up under a tremendous load and will put up even with incredible adversity and hardship when they possess just one thing from those they serve: gratitude. Take that away, and the will to carry on the struggle routinely goes with it.

Our God also wants to see gratitude in those he blesses, but with God it's different. Where you and I want to experience gratitude from those we serve because it makes *us* feel better, God has no such need or lack. As in all things, God wants to see thankfulness in his children simply because it is the right thing to do and the best way to be. That's probably why we find an interesting fact whenever God in his Word calls for thanksgiving from his children: he almost always gives us the *why*. In other words, he demonstrates to us just exactly *why* grateful is the right way for us to be.

Our text for this special service of thanksgiving is a perfect example of our God giving his people the 'why' of thanksgiving. What we will there find is that the "why" is routinely misidentified – by the world, of course, but also by us. Our text is found in the Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy, the 8th Chapter:

^{ESV} ***Deuteronomy 8:1-10 "The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and***

multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers. ² And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. ³ And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. ⁴ Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. ⁵ Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you. ⁶ So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. ⁷ For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, ⁹ a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰ And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

These are the very words of God. They are thus, in and of themselves, precious *gifts* that we never want to take for granted or to receive without thanksgiving. To help prepare our hearts for the study of these words, to remind us of their divine origin, and as a reminder to receive them with thanksgiving, so we pray, ***"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."*** Amen.

Pretty hard to miss the *why* of thanksgiving in our text for this evening, isn't it? God had just rescued his children from their 400 years of slavery in Egypt and 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. He was bringing them into a land that would best be described not just as a new house, but as a *furnished mansion*. The Lord wasn't bringing the Jews into a wilderness that needed to be tamed and developed; he was giving them prime real-estate that was move-in ready. Others had already done all the heavy lifting of taming the land. What the Jews were about to receive stood in sharp contrast to the wilderness in which they had been wandering for the past four decades. Not only was the land they were receiving rich in

potential (good soil, abundant minerals, flowing streams and springs, etc.) the vineyards, the farms, and the groves had already been established. The wells had already been dug. The fortifications, winepresses, and houses had already been built. All they had to do was move in and reap the bounty that the land was already producing.

But there's another basic truth in our text that is as unusual as it is easy to miss. Our God here reminds his children to be thankful for – and because of – **every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.**

This is a bit jarring if we actually stop to think about it. It's easy to recognize why we should be thankful when someone tells us what they have already done *for* us; it's much harder to recognize when someone is telling us what, for example, they are demanding *from* us. Good parents do this all the time with their children, and those children almost universally have a hard time understanding why they should be thankful for what their parents are demanding from them.

Parents are commanded by God to bring up their children **"in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."** (Ephesians 6:4) Wise parents know that this isn't the path that children naturally choose on their own. Children have to be trained both to recognize and follow that path. All of us are born selfish and self-centered. That has to be trained out of us. All of us are born with a natural inclination toward laziness and carelessness – which also must be trained out of us. All of us are born with a natural disposition toward entitlement and ingratitude. These, too, parents have to purge.

All of this explains why good parents regularly attach a common label or clause to their commands: *"Just do it. Someday you will thank me for it."*

So it was with God in connection with the Jews, and so also it is with God in his dealings with you and me today. God gave his commandments to the Children of Israel not as an attempt to supply himself with something he lacked but so that he could continue to provide his children with all of the good things that *they* needed. Our text therefore begins with God's own *"Just do it. Someday you will thank me for it":* **"The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers."** The good land that God was taking from its prior inhabitants wasn't taken from them because of their piety, morality, and godliness; it was taken from them because of their sin, rebellion, and unbelief. God therefore began with a warning to his children that the same would happen to

them if they chose to go down that same road. There was, therefore, purest love in God's Commandments.

Clearly the same loving warning needs to be repeated to the citizens of our beloved Republic.

All of us share this common tendency toward evil. Nor is that tendency easily trained out of us. God gave the Jews a generous, behind-the-curtain look at his training techniques in our text when he said to them: ***And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.*** ³ ***And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD... Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you.*** ⁶ ***So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him.***

God knew then, as God knows now, that no matter how great or how seemingly permanent the blessing, man forfeits all when he turns against his Creator. God didn't want this for Israel, which is why in our text he gave them the means to avoid that catastrophe. This is, again, his simple: *"Just do it. Someday you will thank me for it."* You and I should have no trouble applying that lesson to ourselves today – which is one reason we give thanks to God for *every word*, both gospel *and* law.

Yet just here we take our Thanksgiving discussion in a little different direction. Take a moment to think through a question I recently heard: *"What if today you only received what you were thankful for yesterday?"*

Disturbing question, isn't it – on a number of different levels.

First consider what our lives would be like if we didn't have what our text refers to as **"every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."** We would literally have nothing, because the paltry little nothings that we might accumulate in this life will be absolutely worthless in eternity. If we only received today what we were consciously thankful for yesterday, few if any would have that

precious Word of God, since most of us routinely take it for granted. In this we are not unlike those 9 lepers who failed to thank Jesus for healing them. How much more precious is that Word of God – that Word that not only shows us the disease of our sin but the divine cure that has already been given to mankind? How much more precious is God's holy Law, which not only shows us our sin and keeps our evil society in check, but also provides us with God's perfect "gift list" by showing us what exactly his will is for our lives?

Yet the question "*What if today you only received what you were thankful for yesterday?*" is even more disturbing than we might first imagine. It indicates a natural and yet serious flaw in sinful mankind's thankfulness. That flaw is this: mankind tends to think of thanksgiving as insurance for the future rather than pure gratitude for the past and present.

Thanksgiving that is truly pure is a profoundly *confident* thing. It does not seek future benefits; it rather thanks God for the past and present, while regarding the future with absolute certainty. Christian thanksgiving says, "*I don't need to worry about the future. God will take care of that. I just want to thank and praise him for what he has already done for and given to someone as undeserving as me.*" Understand that this is not natural to sinful mankind; it is learned behavior. Man naturally looks to the future with apprehension and uncertainty – in part because he realizes that he cannot control the future anymore than he could control the past. So man has historically based his giving of thanks on fear of what the future might hold, or withhold, rather than on what has already been received.

The fact is God has brought us to a most excellent place. Not only have we been given lives of peace and prosperity, there is an even better place into which our Savior is leading us. How close each of us stands to the door of that inheritance we cannot know. What we can know, with thanksgiving, is that the God who has given us all of the lesser things of this life will not now withhold whatever good thing, or whatever discipline, is necessary to finish the job he began.

To that God, our God, we say with Paul in Romans 11: **Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!** ³⁴ **"For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"** ³⁵ **"Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"** ³⁶ ¶ **For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.**

Let this be our pure, confident song of thanksgiving. Amen.

Thanksgiving Confession (based on the 1st Article)

I believe that God has made me and all creatures;

He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members,

my reason, and all my senses, and still preserves them,

He has given me clothing and shoes, food and drink,

house and home, spouse and children,

land, cattle, and all goods;

He daily and richly provides me with all that I need to support this body and life;

He protects me from all danger,

and guards and preserves me from all evil;

and all this out of pure, fatherly, divine goodness and mercy,

without any merit or worthiness in me.

For all of this I thank, praise, serve, and obey Him. Amen.

The Sermon Text: ^{ESV}(Deuteronomy 8:1-10) "The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers. ² And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. ³ And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. ⁴ Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. ⁵ Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you. ⁶ So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. ⁷ For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, ⁹ a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰ And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

"Thankful – For Every Word"

The Offertory – [Sung by All]
Supplement Insert, page 16

The Post-Sermon Hymn - 425 (Verses 5-6) *(Red Hymnal)*
"All Depends on Our Possessing"

The Thanksgiving Confession of Faith *(See bulletin insert)*

The Thanksgiving Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 798 (Verses 1 & 4) *(Brown Hymnal)*
"God, We Praise You"

Silent Prayer



**St Paul Lutheran Church
Bismarck, North Dakota**

Thanksgiving 2019

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E Divide Ave

Bismarck, ND 58501 (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701)425-5483

www.bismarcklutheran.org

Mark Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist
Michael Roehl, Pastor

Thanksgiving Service – November 27, 2019

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 39 *(Red Hymnal)*

"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty"

The Confession of Sins and Absolution

Pastor: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Congregation: If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Pastor: From the conviction of our hearts we confess together:

All: Almighty God, merciful Father, we confess that we were conceived and born with sin. We further confess that we have, since birth, actively sinned against you by our thoughts, words, and actions. We are sorry for our countless sins, and we humble ourselves before your holy presence. Forgive us, for Jesus' sake, and renew us by your Holy Spirit.

Pastor: God the Father has indeed declared you to be not guilty for Jesus' sake. By his command and according to his authority, I announce to you his divine decree that your sins are forgiven, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**[Sung By All] Praise God from whom all blessings flow!
Praise Him, all creatures here below!
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host!
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!**

The Prayer of the Day

The Psalm of the Day - Psalm 67 *(See bulletin insert)*

The Scripture Lessons:

The First Lesson: ^{ESV}(1 Timothy 2:1-4) First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

[Sung By All]

**Now thank we all our God With heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done, In Whom His world rejoices;
Who, from our mothers' arms, Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, And still is ours today.**

The Second Lesson: ^{ESV}(Luke 17:11-19) On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance ¹³ and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." ¹⁴ When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶ and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? ¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

[Sung By All]

**Oh may this bounteous God Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts And blessed peace to cheer us,
And keep us in His grace, And guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills
In this world and the next.**

The Pre-Sermon Hymn - 425 (Verses 1-2, 4) *(Red Hymnal)*
"All Depends on Our Possessing"

