



THANKSGIVING EVE

Light of the Valley Lutheran Church

O Give Thanks to the Lord

I don't knit, but I have respect for those who do. All I see is yarn. It blows my mind to see how a roll of yarn is transformed strand by strand. Even the needle movement is a bit mesmerizing. Before you know it, there is a scarf...mittens...a hat...a blanket...a sweater. There are patterns and shapes made into it. All this was planned out before a single strand of yarn when into it. The knitter knew exactly how this should turn out. They got all the materials and put them all together. At the end is a whole product.

God is a master knitter. He knew the whole package of what we would be before even a single one of our days came to be. He saw my unformed body. He had all the materials. He put me all together. I make mistakes, but I am not a mistake. God purposefully made me.

When I stop to think about what God has made me, the wonders never cease. He knit me together in my mother's womb. Even before he did this, he knew all the events in my life, when they would happen, how they would lead me to him. God knows exactly who I am and what I will become. He knows the number of hairs on my head. He knows all my inmost secrets, the things that I dare never tell another soul. He not only made me so unique, but he also made salvation for me, that through the substitutionary life and death of Jesus Christ, I already know the outcome of the end of my days here on this earth. God made me wonderfully, and he made sure that I was saved to dwell with him in heaven forever. He did the same for you, for all of us. For this, dear God, we praise you.

O Give Thanks to the Lord for Our Creation. A reading from Psalm 139:13-16:

Psalm 139:13-16 (NIV84)

¹³ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, ¹⁶ your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Parents, have you ever had that moment when you are on a day trip, maybe you took the UTA down to Salt Lake City, maybe you were going to the zoo or the children's museum, maybe you were out and about hiking. Then your child looks up at you with those deep eyes and says, "I am so hungry!" You realize that you didn't bring any snacks. It's decision time. Do I run over to McDonald's and pick up a happy meal, run to the grocery store for some graham crackers or fruit snacks, or do I tell them, "Just wait. We will be home soon, and then we can eat."? All the while you are kicking yourself because you forgot to bring some food, even a little snack. Maybe the same realization comes when they say, "I'm thirsty," and you have no water to provide for them. What kind of parent am I? Why did I take us out and about with no food and no water? My child is looking to me for something to eat and something to drink, but I have nothing. I have failed to provide as a parent, and I feel guilty that I cannot satisfy these basic desires of my child.

Can you imagine 6 billion sets of eyes looking to you for their food and water? Can you see those eyes pleading with you to provide for their needs? It's bad enough to see it from your own kids and those starving kids on those commercials, but then to think of the whole world. I...I am not enough. I can't feed them all, even though my heart goes out to them and I want to help and I want to feed them, I can't. I fail to provide. We fail to provide.

But not God. The eyes of all look to him, and he opens up his hand and feed them all. He feeds the birds that we spend hardly a moment thinking about how they get their food. He makes sure that the land produces vegetation, and that we can harvest it at no charge for his services of making seeds grow into plants. In fact, he uses us to provide so much food, that we could feed every person in the world 3 meals a day two times over. God provides and satisfies while we can't always figure that one out.

As you sit around your Thanksgiving meal tomorrow, remember God provided that. He gave you the ability to earn money, to buy the food, the supplies to cook, the ability to cook. He provided for you, as he does for all people.

O Give Thanks to the Lord for Our Food. A reading from Psalm 145:13b, 15-16, a good prayer for before the meal:

Psalm 145:13b, 15-16 (NIV84) ¹³ The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made. ¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. ¹⁶ You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

What's in your attitude as you come to church? I know for me, especially before becoming a pastor, that there were times when I just wanted to get in, hear about our wonderful God, and then go home. I wanted quiet solitude, reflection, and meditation. I wanted to be refreshed with God's Word, and then go home happy. I really tended to come to church selfishly or under obligation.

But all that started to change as I got older. I realized that there was a whole other aspect to church. It wasn't just about my time with God, but now it was also to be with like-minded Christians. It became a place to support one another, encourage one another, pray for one another. If I really wanted to be alone, there are enough churches streaming their services and you can even find ours on Youtube, but we have cause to rejoice as we gather together.

We have something here as a congregation that you can't replicate through wi-fi. We have people, people who have come together for the same purpose of singing the praises of our God, learning about him, and being refreshed with the forgiveness of sins that he offers through Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

I can tell you that every Sunday, I look for every member of this church to walk through the doors and sit in this sanctuary. I pray for it. I look for the new faces who are coming for the first time. I pray for them to be here as well. When I see people missing, it's not because I care about an attendance number, but it's because I want to worship with them. I want them to share in the joy that we are sharing in. I want them to know the God who made them so intricately, who provides for them all the time. I look for you to come to church with me so that we can rejoice together.

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 we see the Day approaching.

O Give Thanks to the Lord for a Place to Worship. A reading from Psalm 122:1:

Psalm 122:1 (NIV84)

¹ I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD."

God forgives all my sins. Can a day go by when I do not remember this or appreciate this? Without the forgiveness of sins, who cares about going to the house of the Lord? Without forgiveness of all our wrongs, what does it matter if we have food to eat? Without forgiveness of my mistakes, I might as well just be dust instead of an intricate creation of our God.

With forgiveness, life completely changes. With forgiveness, I don't have just one day a year to return thanks to our Lord, but I have endless opportunities to thank and praise him. I don't just praise him for turkey and stuffing and mashed potatoes and sweet potatoes and pumpkin pie. I don't have to celebrate this one holiday as if it's the only day I have to give thanks.

With the forgiveness of sins, I have reason to thank God every day. His forgiveness to us, him treating us not as our sins deserve, is free. There is nothing owed; Jesus paid it all with his life and his death and his resurrection. I am not obligated to thank him, but I thank him freely because of his forgiveness which comes from his mercy, not dealing with us as we deserve. This is my reason to live. This is my reason to rejoice. This is my reason to give thanks.

O Give Thanks to the Lord for His Mercy. A reading from Psalm 103:1-5. 8-13:

Psalm 103:1-5, 8-13 (NIV84)

¹ Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. ² Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits— ³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. ⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. ¹³ As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;

Do you go around the table on Thanksgiving and say aloud what you are thankful for? We know we are thankful; why verbalize it? How can you not? When we join with family and friends to return thanks, we want to make it known why we feel so privileged and so blessed.

God recorded so many things in his Word to give us so many things to be thankful for. We start with the cross and the forgiveness and mercy poured out on us from that amazing sacrifice, that while we were not perfect, while we continue to make mistakes and sin, God paid for all of our sins. He takes our guilt away. We are perfect in his sight by what Jesus has done for us. We move on from that great and ultimate truth to the truths we heard today already from the Psalms, that God made us, provides for us, and gives us a house for worship. And then there are so many more promises and deeds that God recorded for us in his Word that he wants us to know and to hold close to our hearts.

If you think you might have trouble tomorrow coming up with what you are thankful for, start searching the Holy Scriptures, God's Word, the Bible. God gave this book to us so that we would know how much he blesses us. Thanksgivings will come and go. Days will go by and months and years, but we will never run dry of the blessings that God has recorded for us in his Word. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God stands forever. May we meditate on it daily and give thanks to God out loud and tell others all those ways that he blesses us. We can give thanks to God by proclaiming all his wonderful acts that he recorded for us in the Bible.

O Give Thanks to the Lord for His Word. A reading from Psalm 105:1-2:

Psalm 105:1-2 (NIV84)

¹ Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. ² Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.

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