

Thanksgiving Day – Vicar Anderson Homily  
Psalm 92: “It is Good to Give Thanks to the Lord”  
November 24/25, 2021 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

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Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new to us every morning, and, though we have in no way deserved Your goodness, You abundantly provide for all our needs of body and soul: Give us, we pray, Your Holy Spirit, that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness toward us, give You thanks, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (ELH, Collect 143)

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)*

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*The sermon text for this Thanksgiving Day is taken from Psalm 92. We read selected verses in Jesus’ name:*

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; 2 to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, 4 For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy. 5 How great are your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep! The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13 They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God.

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*These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)*

In Christ Jesus, who graciously gives you everything needed for body and soul and to whom we owe proper thanks and praise, dear fellow redeemed:

In 1621 one year after English immigrants settled a small village in Plymouth Massachusetts, William Bradford organized a celebratory feast following the pilgrim’s first successful corn harvest. He also invited those Native American allies who had helped them learn to cultivate corn to join in the feast. This Thanksgiving marks 400 years since that first autumn harvest feast took place. However, it wasn’t until 1863 in the midst of the Civil War that Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving Day to be held each November.

Although Thanksgiving has Christian roots, today it is primarily celebrated as a secular holiday. In fact, for many people, Thanksgiving is no more than a day to get together with family, eat an abundance of food and then maybe sit down in front of the football game until they doze off. Then it usually culminates in them eating their fill in pie and leftovers again later that evening. Some only recognize Thanksgiving as the day before the real holiday, a day highly revered in today’s society, “Black Friday.”

Most people will be thankful around their dinner table this Thanksgiving, but to whom are they giving their thanks? Where do they think all of their blessings and gifts come from? Christians

know that everything in their life comes from God and that “it is good to give thanks to the Lord” (Ps. 92:1).

The first reason it is good to give thanks is because our all-powerful Lord is owed it, and the second is to show us that we are dependent upon Him and can rely on Him for everything we need. Although we know this truth we also forget it and it can only lead to an empty kind of thankfulness.

The Lord is always at work in our lives, for our benefit and for the benefit of all people. Occasionally a sunrise will catch our eyes and cause us to admire its beauty, but do we always stop think about how the sun does not rise without God’s providence. If the Lord decided today that the sun wasn’t going to rise, it wouldn’t, and all life on earth would quickly perish. In this and other ways, we become so accustomed to His mighty works. The Lord’s extraordinary works become ordinary in our eyes.

The works of His hands include; our home, our family, our faith in Him, and much more. As Luther’s explanation to the first Article tells us, “God has provided us with all we need to support this body and life.” The Lord has created us by giving us a mother and father, determining the proper time in which we would live our lives on earth. Not only this, “He also guards and protects us from all evil out of His purely divine goodness and mercy, that we are duty bound to thank, praise, serve and obey Him” (SC, 1<sup>st</sup> Art.).

As Christians we usually emphasize our duty to obey the Lord’s commandments and to serve our neighbors, but how are we doing in our duty to thank and praise Him? Too often we become caught up in our important lives that we forget to give our Lord the thanks He is due. When our lives are relatively trial free, it can be easy to become complacent in our thanks.

Think of how rare it is to go a single day without clean drinking water in our homes or to have food on our table for dinner. Or, how it isn’t until our heat goes out that we begin to be very thankful for a working furnace. We may spend a few days being thankful for heat, but sadly it doesn’t take long for us to expect that furnace to kick in, maintaining that comfortable 70-degree home. There are many things in life that the Lord provides us with that we take for granted and forget to thank Him for.

Had the Lord never made His mighty works known to us in His Word they would have remained hidden from our eyes. We would have been stuck in our thankless state, unaware of the greatest treasure given to us, faith in our Lord and Savior.

You were brought to faith because His Word called you. Your parents heard and believed God’s Word and brought you to the Baptismal font. There you were washed and cleansed and your faith was born. This work of the Holy Spirit was for you, so that your heart would be awakened to a new life of faith in your Lord (John 3:5).

Through His Word, God has revealed to us how He has saved all people from eternal destruction. He chose a way, contrary to human reasoning, to free us from our bondage to sin. Our Lord became a man and lived out His life on the earth. To many people Jesus seemed like an ordinary man living a pretty sad and pitiful life, a life that ultimately led to Him being hung

on a wooden cross. In what appears to be a pathetic event in history God brings about His most extraordinary achievement, Jesus' blood, spilt upon the cross, cleansing the entire world of all sin and guilt (1 John 1:7).

Our gracious Lord gave His life for us and He knows our weaknesses, how in times of trial we tend to grumble rather than be thankful, how in good times we can be so distracted that we forget to stop and give Him thanks. The Lord thanked His father countless times in His life; where you have failed to thank God for things, His perfect thankfulness counts as yours. His blood covers all your sins of selfishness and self-centeredness. You are fully forgiven because of what your Savior has done for you.

He secured salvation on the cross for you and rose on the third day to show His victory over sin, death and the devil. Now He has also planted you in His house where this same life and salvation comes to you. The Lord has blessed you with a church that holds to His truth, where His Word is preached and His Sacraments are administered. In His house He changes your heart into one of thanks, making you glad to hear His Word. Here His Word reminds you of all He has done, reminding you of His love for you.

Much like the pilgrims at Plymouth who cultivated and cared for that first corn harvest, God's Word and Sacraments cultivate you. In His Word He continues to show you the works of His hands, making you like a mighty cedar tree, with a strong foundation and flourishing branches. His body and blood strengthen your faith, helping you overcome the storms of your sinful flesh. Like the palm tree you are rooted in His means of grace, which enable you to withstand the strongest winds of the world and devil that batter against you.

"It is good to give thanks to the Lord." This Thanksgiving Day, and each new morning and night, let us remember that all we have comes from the Lord. The world will continue to foolishly thank themselves for their blessings and good fortune, but we will wisely thank our Lord! Amen.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

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