

Thanksgiving – Vicar Lehne Sermon  
Psalm 100: “God’s Love Endures Forever.”  
11/22/23 | Jerico & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

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O God, our Creator, Preserver, and Protector, we would not be alive today were it not for your steadfast love and faithfulness. Continue to remind us of your love every day and continue to preserve us and protect us until the day that you call us home to heaven. In your Son’s name we pray. Amen.

*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 today is Psalm 100. We read as follows in Jesus’ name:*

<sup>1</sup> Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! <sup>2</sup> Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! <sup>3</sup> Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. <sup>4</sup> Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! <sup>5</sup> For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

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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 is our ultimate reason to give thanks, dear fellow redeemed:

Thanksgiving is many things to many people. To some, it’s the Thanksgiving Day Parade, in which giant parade balloons of their favorite characters float down the street. To others, it’s the Thanksgiving Day football game, complete with a halftime show that’s performed by some of their favorite celebrities. Still, to others, it’s simply getting to spend time with their friends and family. But, of course, if Thanksgiving is anything, it has to be Thanksgiving dinner: turkey; stuffing; mashed potatoes and gravy; pumpkin pie! In fact, Thanksgiving dinner is such a big part of Thanksgiving that many people go without eating all day in preparation for the massive feast.

Now, these are all perfectly fine things to do on Thanksgiving, but what many people fail to realize is that the true meaning of the holiday is right there in the name: Thanksgiving. It’s a day in which we are to give thanks, but give thanks for what? The psalmist answers this question by saying in verses 4 and 5 of our reading for today, “Give thanks to [the Lord]; bless his name! For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.” Through the love and faithfulness that he shows us, God proves that he is good and worthy of our thanks. But how does God show his love and faithfulness to us? The psalmist also answers this question by saying in verse 3 of our reading, “It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.”

This verse paints God in two ways: as our Creator and our Good Shepherd. As our Creator, God shows his love for us by giving us life. Without him, none of us would even exist in the first place. As Psalm 139:13 says, “[Y]ou formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in

my mother's womb." As our Good Shepherd, God shows his love for us by preserving us and protecting us. Everything that we have comes from God, and God makes sure that we have everything that we need, like a shepherd leading his sheep to green pastures and flowing water. As Psalm 145:15 says, "The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season." But it isn't just because God provides for us that we're alive, it's also because God protects us, like a shepherd who fights off the hungry wolves that are after his sheep. As Psalm 91:11 says, "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways."

God being our Creator and Good Shepherd in our earthly lives is enough of a reason to give thanks to him, but God is also our Creator and Good Shepherd in our spiritual lives. God wants us to be with him in heaven, where we will never want for anything. However, because of the countless sins that we committed, we were not able to stand in the presence of a perfect God and were doomed to be cast out from his presence into hell, where we would pay the price for our sins for all eternity.

There was no way that we could change our fate and enter God's presence on our own, but God the Father didn't want to leave us to our fate. He loved us too much to do that. So, he sent his only begotten Son, Jesus, to earn the honor of entering his presence for us. Jesus died an innocent death on the cross, taking all of our sins on himself and paying the price for them, so that our perfect, heavenly Father would no longer see our imperfections. He also applied his perfect life to our lives so that we are able to enter the presence of our perfect Father in heaven. These blessings that Jesus won for us are brought to us and made our own through the waters of baptism. In those holy waters, our old sinful self is drowned, and our new holy self is born, uniting with Christ and rising to the surface. While we were once spiritually dead, God has given us new life in Christ.

However, our faith is just like our physical bodies: it needs nourishment, or it will die. Thankfully, God does not leave us alone once he brings us to faith but continues to nourish our faith by feeding us his Word. Every time we enter his presence in this life, gather around his Word with other believers, we hear the good news of what Jesus has done to save us and of how God continues to work to preserve us and protect us.

Because of this, our faith is strengthened, but our faith needs more than just nourishment. It also needs protection, protection from our spiritual enemies (the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature) who are constantly trying to lead us astray so that we won't get to enter God's perfect presence. These spiritual enemies of ours try every trick in the book on us: they tell us that our sins aren't so bad, and that everyone else is doing them anyway; they tell us that we need to reject God in order to fit in with the rest of the world and be accepted by them; they tell us that God is a liar and that he doesn't do the things that he says he does, so we shouldn't follow him; and they tell us that there is no way that God could ever forgive us of our sins, so we should just give up hope. Our spiritual enemies play the role of both friend and foe, whatever it takes to win against us.

But there is no need for us to fear our spiritual enemies, for God is always there to protect us from them. They cannot harm us, nor do their accusations succeed against us, for Jesus has paid the price for all our sins, and as a result, eternal life in heaven is ours. As Jesus says in John

10:28, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."

So, we see that God is not only our Creator, Preserver, and Protector in our earthly lives, but also in our spiritual lives. For all this, we ought to give thanks to God. But there are times when we are tempted to think that there isn't much to give thanks to God for at all, especially when we take a look around us and see the troubles that we all face every day. Prices continue to go up on everything, making it harder and harder to provide for ourselves and our families. Our loved ones continue to get sick and die. There continues to be war and violence throughout the world. And the world continues to encourage sinful behavior, seemingly wanting us to accept every kind of lifestyle, no matter how sinful it is, while, at the same time, rejecting those who are Christians, and even attacking them. Because of everything that's going wrong in the world, it can sometimes make us wonder: is God truly in control? And if that thought starts to creep into our minds, it can tempt us to abandon God and turn to others for answers.

Thankfully, even though there are times when we aren't faithful to God, God always remains faithful to us. Like a shepherd, he does not abandon his sheep that have wandered off, but he drops everything to find his lost sheep and lead them back to his flock. He accomplishes this through the preaching of his Word, the same Word that he uses to create and nourish our faith. When the Word is preached to us, we are made aware of the sins that we committed that caused us to go astray. But then, we receive the comfort that we have the forgiveness of sins because Jesus has paid the price for all our sins by his innocent death on the cross, that he willingly endured out of his great love for us.

Knowing all that God has done for us, and especially knowing what he has done to save us from our sins and open the gates of heaven to us, we are moved to give him thanks. But this thanksgiving is not limited to just one day of the year, nor is it limited to just when we go to church, but we show thanksgiving to God every day in all that we say and do, as the light that we now have in Christ shines before men. In fact, we can't help but give thanks to God, because in every area of our lives, in how God made us, sent his only begotten Son to save us, and continues to provide for our needs, guard us from danger, and keep our faith alive, we know that God's love endures forever. As the explanation to the First Article of the Creed says, "[F]or all this it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him."

*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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