

Thanksgiving Eve – Pr. Faugstad homily
Malachi 3:6-18: “We Give Thanks to the LORD by Trusting Him.”
November 26, 2025 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Malachi 3:6-18

“For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed. From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, ‘How shall we return?’ Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. And thereby put Me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts. / “Your words have been hard against Me, says the LORD. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against You?’ You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping His charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evil-doers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.’” / Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before Him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed His name. “They shall be Mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up My treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.” (ESV)

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 thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen. (*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, p.166)

In Christ Jesus, in whose name we give thanks to God the Father Almighty who made us and still preserves us, dear fellow redeemed:

We are getting reminders from all over that this is a season of giving. And it certainly is. Stores have stocked their shelves with Christmas specials, suggesting at every aisle what we might want to give our family members and friends. Various charitable organizations are busy sending out reminders about “Giving Tuesday” next week. And the event that brings us here this evening has this message in its name: Thanks-giving.

But who is the object for this giving of thanks? To whom is this giving directed? When people focus only on what they are thankful for, they might miss the thankful to. They are thankful for

their “food and clothing, home and family, property and goods, and all that [they] need to support this body and life” (Explanation to First Article). But they fail to acknowledge that these things are richly and daily provided for them by our Father in heaven.

It is He who deserves our thanks. It is He who should receive our thanksgiving. For all of His gracious gifts, we are “in duty bound to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him.” Every good thing we have comes from Him. He gives us our daily bread, all that we need for this body and life. There is nothing that we own that doesn’t actually belong to Him. We enjoy the riches, fruits, and blessings of His creation.

Since everything is His, and He freely provides what we need, why would God charge His people of robbing Him, like He does in today’s reading? *“Will man rob God?”* He asks. *“Yet you are robbing Me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’”* And He gives the answer: *“In your tithes and contributions.”*

A tithe was a tenth of a family’s income. God required this of each of the tribes of Israel for the support of the priests and Levites, so they could give attention to the sacrifices and prayers in the temple. The Levites had no territory of their own but were to be provided for by the other tribes. The LORD said that this command was *“a perpetual statute throughout your generations”* – it was to go on indefinitely (Num. 18:23).

But the people were not giving the tithe as God had commanded them to do. This meant that the priests and Levites were not adequately supported, and the temple sacrifices were not being done as God commanded. Why were the people holding back? Why were they not giving what He required? The LORD exposed the thoughts and intentions of their hearts. He knew why. The people were saying, *“It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping His charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts?”*

They were concerned about whether what they were commanded to give was really worth what they were getting. Were the imperfect priests and Levites really worth ten percent of their income? Was it really beneficial to keep the LORD’s laws and deny themselves and their desires? Nearly 2500 years have passed since these words were written, but nothing has really changed. We hear all around us (and sometimes think it ourselves) that what God requires of us is greater than what we receive from Him.

Do we really need a pastor and a church? We can read the Bible and pray to God on our own. Do we really need to follow God’s law so strictly? It should be enough to try to be nice to others and be a responsible citizen. But a life lived apart from God and against His will is no life of freedom and happiness. Galatians 6 says, *“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life”* (vv. 7-8).

“Sowing to the flesh” means following our sinful desires and giving ourselves over to sin. “Sowing to the Spirit” means following the Word of God, living according to His will, trusting in Him for our life and salvation. When our primary concern is not desperately clinging to what we have on earth, hoarding our riches so we have enough for the future, but is rather relying on God, then we are ready to enjoy the abundant gifts that He gives.

He will provide for us. He has promised to do it. Jesus says, *"Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you"* (Mat. 6:31-33). The LORD will not forsake or forget about His dear children who trust in Him.

He sent His Son to redeem your soul through His suffering and death. He brought you to the waters of Baptism to claim You as His own. He sets the Food of Heaven on the altar at church for your spiritual nourishment and food on your table at home for your physical nourishment. He will never run out of good things to give you because all things are His, on earth and in heaven.

And if He will never run out of good things, neither will you. *"Give freely and generously from the heart,"* says the LORD, *"And thereby put Me to the test... if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."* The gifts we give to God are not about amounts of money. A tithe is no longer required of God's New Testament people. He wants our gifts to come from humble hearts that recognize and appreciate His gifts.

The highest thanks and praise we can give to God is believing what He promises, living according to His Commandments, and leaving all our needs in the present and the future in His hands. This is the thanksgiving that He desires from us, the thanksgiving that He loves to receive.

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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