

Thanksgiving Eve/November 21, 2018
Deuteronomy 8:1-10/Giving Thanks
Holy Spirit Lutheran Church
Pastor Jerry Stobaugh

“...and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.”

In the Nicene Creed we confess our belief in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. With these words we acknowledge God made us and all creatures; he gave us our bodies and souls, eyes, ears, and all our members, our reason and all our senses, and still takes care of them. Also contained in these words of faith is our conviction that God gives us the material things necessary for our life: clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, spouse and children, land, animals and everything we have. Every time we confess our faith in God, we acknowledge God richly and daily provides us with all we need to support us in this body and life.

So this evening, we gather to give thanks to God for all these gifts. We come here today to thank God for everything we have, for everything we have comes to us from his gracious and merciful hand. In Deuteronomy, Moses reminds us that throughout our life God provides us everything we need. Hear again these words from our Old Testament reading: [Dt 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. 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. 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. Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years. Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you. So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. 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, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, 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. And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.”

Through these words, the Holy Spirit holds up Israel in the desert as a reminder that God takes care of us in every time and every place. Just as God provided for Israel in the wilderness, today he provides for us as we make our pilgrimage through life. When Israel was hungry in the desert, God sent manna from heaven to keep them fed. When we sit around our tables piled high with food, God provides it, so we may be fed. When Israel’s clothes should have worn out and fallen off of them, God preserved their raiment and kept them safe from the elements. When we don our Sunday best or even our old comfortable clothes at home, God provides them, that our bodies’ safety and honor may be protected. When Israel’s feet should have been sore and their strength dried up, God kept their feet strong and supplied them their strength; the same is true for us. Even when it seems our strength is gone and our bodies pushed past their breaking point, God still gives us strength and keeps us safe.

Most importantly, we learn from the blessed Moses God gives us all these things to reveal [Dt 8:3] “...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.”

Ultimately our lives are preserved not only by the material things God provides, but by his Holy Word. It was by God’s Word all the physical things supplying our needs were created. It was by God’s Word the whole creation came into being. It is by God’s Word the whole creation is sustained. So it is by God’s Word we, as God’s people, are preserved and blessed throughout the ages and are still preserved and blessed today. If we do not heed this truth and give thanks to God, we miss the full meaning of Thanksgiving. So when we have eaten and are full, we too, bless the LORD our God for all the good things he has given us.

As we celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday, the Holy Spirit moves us to “be thankful” not just in some general sense, but specifically to give thanks to our God. As Christians who understand everything we have comes as a gift from God, we are meet and right to thank God for the food at our feasts, the clothes on our backs, the families round our tables, and the joy of the day. As we give thanks for these gifts, we also thank God for his greatest gift, the Word Made Flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Word who spoke creation into being. He is the Word who sustains our very existence by his forgiveness and grace. Christ is the one by whom we come to know God the Father as our Creator, and he is the one who brings us into the Father’s presence by his grace, washed clean from our sin in his blood shed upon the cross. Christ by his resurrection has led the way into the good land which God has given us, the New Jerusalem, where we will live forever in praise and thanksgiving of God Almighty.

Today, as he does every time we gather, Christ grants you these gifts by His Word of grace, and in His very body and blood. Just as you

gave thanks to God the Father for the bread and wine which are His body and blood of the Eucharist, give thanks to God the Father for Jesus, for His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation, and for all the many gifts He pours down upon you each and every day. As you celebrate this Thanksgiving holiday, say, “Thanks God!” May you always remember to say this each and every day from now and into eternity. Deo Gratias! Thanks be to God!