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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
November 28, 2019
Thanksgiving Day

Scripture Lessons: Psalm 103:1-5, Phil. 4:4-8, Mat. 16:5-12
Hymns: 44; 36 (liturgy) 567; 30:1,5 (offertory) 568;
Special hymn "Our Tables soon with Food Are Dressed"
(tune 458)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our
Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Psalm 116:12-14

¹² What shall I render to the LORD

For all His benefits toward me?

¹³ I will take up the cup of salvation,

And call upon the name of the LORD.

¹⁴ I will pay my vows to the LORD

Now in the presence of all His people. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is
truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Thanksgiving

We know that thanksgiving is to be a part of every day of
our lives. We acknowledge that truth with our common
table prayer, "*Oh give thanks unto the Lord for He is good
for His mercy endures forever.*" (Psalm 106:1) Yes, we should
acknowledge the goodness of our God and all His gifts and
benefits, as it was pointed out for us in our opening

reading. The Lord who has forgiven all our iniquities at great expense, the holy precious blood of Jesus, Jesus' innocent sufferings and death, that same Lord watches out for us in all our ways. We confessed in Luther's explanation to the First Article of the Apostle's Creed that we are not receiving all that we need to sustain body and life because we are entitled to all these things. Rather we receive all in spite of the fact that we are not worthy of the Lord's blessing. All that we have: food and clothing, house and home, spouse and children, indeed all our goods come to us because God "*is our good and gracious Father in haven, **NOT** because of anything I have done to earn or deserve it.*" We conclude that because we have received such bountiful blessings of material goods from the Lord that it is our "*duty to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him.*" (Luther's Small Catechism; Explanation to the 1st Article)

And that brings us to the point of having a special day of thanksgiving. There are any number of scripture passages that encourage us to thank and praise God, but that doesn't mean that we are especially good at it. In fact I would contend that because of the weakness of our sinful flesh we are not particularly good at showing God gratitude for all His benefits. The words of our text give us some instruction from the Holy Spirit in --

THEME: Showing the Lord Proper Gratitude .

Our text begins with a good question:

I. What Can One Offer God?

Let us briefly consider the question from two different directions.

We might start with the idea that the Lord doesn't need anything from us. He is totally self-sufficient. Looking at this from another perspective we must acknowledge that everything we have is already the Lord's as we confess in one of our offering prayers:

"I give Thee but Thine own, Whate'er the gift may,

All that I have is Thine alone, A trust, oh Lord, from Thee!"

(The Lutheran Hymnal 441:1)

The importance then of our response to the Lord is the attitude of the heart. It is the gratitude the Lord desires to see, that we are willing even eager to give back to Him, in both our offerings, and in support of those in need. And that is where the problems with our sinful flesh can show up. Ingratitude is seen in a number of different ways. One might take the blessings we receive from the Lord for granted. On these cold winter nights we are warm in our beds with a real roof over our heads. We may just get ready for bed and forget that this is a blessing, a blessing that not all people enjoy.

At the end of our bulletin this morning you will find a quote from Martin Luther concerning how easy it is to be like an animal diving into the feeding trough without a thought about how all that is bounty spread on our tables comes to us from the Lord. You know how easy that is to do? WE go through the drive through at McDonalds and are handed a bag full of food, and we start stuffing our faces without giving it a thought that yes, even this comes to us from God.

Another manifestation of our sinful nature is in the occasional discontentment that gets the better of us. This is one fault we would like to deny but the commercial, material world works very hard at undermining our contentment and sowing the seeds of dissatisfaction with what we have. We may easily fall victim to the world's depiction of all the superior homes or vacations or vehicles that we ought to have. As a result many people make poor choices and get themselves in debt to the point that they can't see their way out, or they aren't fulfilling those other responsibilities. They don't even think about giving more to church or charity because they have put themselves in such a situation that they simply feel that can't! There was a news story recently regarding an

impending debt crisis in America not on homes, but with cars. When one finds themselves in financial jam, well then sometimes we simply don't look at what we have with the thankful spirit we once had.

Well to get to the point, it really is quite a good idea that we take a day to count the blessings that we have in our lives and remember that they come to us from the Lord.

However we really haven't yet answered the question "*What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?*" (v.12)

The Spirit's answer describes -

II. A Life of Faith.

Let us begin with the Spirit's answer of "*I will take up the cup of salvation.*" (v. 13) When Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well He encouraged her (and so also us) to drink of Him as the living water, a water that would well up within us as "*a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.*" (John 4:14) Yes, we do this though faith in Jesus. That faith comes to us through the Word. The Spirit of God works through the Word to create and sustain and build faith. We take up the cup of salvation when we faithfully and regularly partake of the means of grace, that is the gospel in Word and sacrament. Yes, when we hear the Lord speak to us in His Word of His love and forgiveness, when we come to the Lord's Table and here receive the very body and true blood which Jesus sacrificed for us and for our salvation, then we are taking up the cup of salvation.

This is the beginning of showing gratitude to the Lord even as we grow in our knowledge of God and His grace toward us. Deeper knowledge, deeper faith, deeper appreciation of God's grace is all seen by God as true signs of thankfulness of His merciful kindness toward us.

The Spirit continues with “**And call upon the name of the LORD.**” (v.13) This is an act of devotion, or worship. We call upon the name of the LORD because He is our God and we are His people. We call upon the name of the LORD to pray, praise, and give thanks. Coming before the LORD with our prayers and petitions is important in giving God the honor that is due Him. We acknowledge Him as the God of our salvation as well as our Creator, Preserver, and Sanctifier. Apart from the LORD we have no life, there is no life. It is only right that He be the One that we turn to in time of need. He promises to hear us when we call upon His name, and He promises to deliver us from every evil.

We “call upon the name of the **LORD.**” There it is again, that word **LORD** all in large case letters reminding us that when we call upon the name of the LORD we are calling upon the covenant God who reveals Himself to us in His grace. He is our Savior God. So we call upon the name of our Redeemer God knowing His love, and His faithfulness. That is giving God the respect and honor due Him!

The Spirit continues with the reminder that we pay our vows to the Lord. Every one of us that is a baptized child of God has vowed our faithfulness to God. Most of us have confirmed those vows to the Lord. Actually we have made many vows regarding being faithful to Him, to His Word, to faithfully regularly use the means of Grace, to worship together. Some of us who serve the Lord’s Church have made additional vows to the Lord that we will be faithful to this special calling extended to us by the Lord through His Church. All of this can be challenging as we live busy lives with many other obligations and responsibilities and amusements. However, if we would show **thankfulness** to the Lord, show **gratitude** for all He has so faithfully done for us, let us also endeavor to be **faithful** to Him. Let us not minimize church involvement, but seek ways in which we can serve to the glory of His name, Serve the Lord with gladness!

Finally the psalmist adds that he will pay his vows to the Lord **in the presence of all His people.** (v.14) The presence of all God's people brings us right here to church where we believers assemble together to worship and glorify our God. We do this together even that we might encourage one another in keeping true to our faith and confession, and to work together to advance the Lord's kingdom work which He has entrusted to us.

So today on this national day of Thanksgiving, it is a real blessing from God that we know what this day is really all about. We gather here this morning to give thanks to God, and not just for an hour, but that we rededicate ourselves to lives of faith and thanksgiving, that all may understand that it is the **Lord** that blesses us in all our ways. We glorify and praise His name for all His gifts and benefits!

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.