

Thanksgiving – St. Matthew 6:25-34
God Has Sought You Out to Bless You

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A Blessed Thanksgiving to all of you!

Let us pray and thank our Father in heaven for this day.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for all Your benefits, especially for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem both our bodies and souls so that they may be united once again on the last day to worship and praise You for all eternity. Thank you also for sending Your Holy Spirit to us to create and strengthen faith in us through Your Word and Sacraments so that we learn to correctly acknowledge that all we are and have is a gift of Your infinite grace. Hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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The text for our meditation today is taken from the 6th chapter of St.

Matthew, reading selective verses. We read as follows in Jesus' name.

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 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. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”^(ESV)

These are Your words, heavenly Father.

Sanctify us by Your truth, Your word is truth. Amen.

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*In the name of the Christ, for Whom the Father is merciful to us,
Dear Fellow Redeemed,
Grace, mercy, and peace are yours this Day of Thanksgiving.*

Tomorrow/Today many families & neighbors will take some time, perhaps before they eat their big meal, and go around listing off the things for which they are thankful. Many of these lists will include general categories like: family, friends, food, their community, their house, and so on. This listing of our blessings is good and salutary for us because it makes us take a step back from our daily troubles, constant anxieties and, let's face it, continuous complaining.

But Thanksgiving is more than just listing your blessings. It is recognizing the One “from whom all blessings flow,” as Luther reminds us in the Explanation to the 4th Petition, “*God certainly gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all the wicked; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to acknowledge this & to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.*” What a blessing it is for all when the Father's name is invoked, when the prayer is prayed in Jesus' name, and the Holy Spirit is remembered and praised for His work among us.

I've seen a number of movies and shows with this ritual in them, perhaps you have, too. Some of these productions will have a prayer. Many of these will use the general/generic word 'god', very, very few will get any more specific about which god. This is even true about supposedly 'Christian' productions, they seem to just assume you know to whom they're praying.

From a business standpoint, we can understand why? The producers of such mass media productions are trying to appeal to the largest number of people possible. This generic god is used in order to incorporate all beliefs. Everyone can assume that their own god is thanked.

Some of these so-called 'prayers' are so bland,
they don't even have a recipient, they only imply a recipient.
They're just statements: "We are just so thankful for... Amen."
So even the atheist can 'pray' along.
One can even consider that no god is intended at all,
just fate, blind chance, or personal effort.
Of course, this is reinforced even further when no prayer is said
either before or after the meal.

But when there is no god to thank,
then there is none upon which to lean when there are troubles.
Where do you turn when your blessings cause you trouble?
When your parents, siblings, or children don't speak to you?
When your friends turn on you?
When your government threatens your peace and safety?
When your food makes you deathly ill?
When your financial security isn't?

Doesn't Jesus freely admit in our text that there will be trouble?
He says, **Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.**

No wonder there is no shortage of anxiety among the godless.
They think and act as if they were in control,
as if their life belonged to them.
They spend their days trying to get ahead.
They have no one to turn to in order to take that burden away.

But is this just a problem among the heathen?
We spend our days trying to design our life the way we want it,
and when it doesn't turn out as we planned or hoped,
we're angry or anxious that we won't be happy,
as if this were the goal and substance of our earthly life.

But isn't this what Jesus warned His disciples about in our text,
After all these things the Gentiles (unbelievers) seek.
You act just as God-less at times as your unbelieving neighbor
don't you? Thinking... believing, that it all depends on you.
The Amer. Dream, that you can pull yourself up by your boot straps
or that you can be a self-made man or woman,

is just that, a dream. And a very enticing dream at times.
But when all hell breaks loose and you find out how much
power and control over things you really have,
it is a nightmare that gives you terrors.

You no more deserve your earthly blessings than the 1%,
the extremely wealthy.
Then again, you no more deserve your blessings
than the rest of us 99%ers.
God gives to all according to His grace – His undeserved love.
**He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good,
and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.** (Matt. 5:45)

But while there is great disparity in wealth between the 1% & 99%,
All are equal in their absolute spiritual unworthiness
to receive any of God's blessings.
And at the same time, all are made equal in the full and free
forgiveness purchased for them in Jesus' blood.

But this blessing is sorely underestimated and under-appreciated,
even by us who recognize His sacrifice on our behalf.
You spend your time worrying about food, clothing, money,
health, relationships, jobs, comfort, and pleasure,
but what about your spiritual life and the condition you are in?
Are you anxious about your indifference toward your pet sins,
the sins you know are sins, but don't want to give up just yet,
So you continue in them as if Jesus didn't die for them?
Are you anxious about your spiritual poverty, being rich in greed,
envy, slander, lust, covetousness, and idolatry?

But maybe you aren't anxious about what you shall eat or drink,
or what you shall wear? Your cupboards and closets are full.
It's easy to think that if my cupboards and closets are full,
then God must be pleased with me.
I must be doing something right.
But how often do you concern yourself with what you are
wearing, the rags of self-righteousness and ungratefulness.
How often do you concern yourself with what are are
eating and drinking, a regular diet of materialism and sloth,

while ignoring the feast of forgiveness God has prepared for you.

My fellow sinners, God does not overlook these things.

He takes them all very seriously.

He demands perfection, not callous perseverance in sin.

And this is why Jesus bids us,

seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Priority #1 is your spiritual life and well-being.

All other things are meaningless without it,

**For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world,
and loses his own soul? (Mark 8:36)**

To seek God's kingdom and His righteousness

is to seek Christ and His forgiveness.

The Father does not overlook sin, He demands a payment.

However, this payment is nothing that you can render,
no amount of gold or silver is enough.

The 1% can earn it no more than that 99%.

But that doesn't mean it's unattainable.

The Father paid our debt for us as a full and free gift,

– the life, death, and resurrection of the Father's own Son.

If you're anxious about what God's verdict will be when you die,

then seek His Son's righteousness given to you in these words,

“Your sins are forgiven you.”

Your pastors love to say them and love to say them to you,

whether publicly in the Divine Service, or privately in confession.

Seek His righteousness regularly and often in the Lord's Supper

where He gives to you the same body and blood

with which He purchased your forgiveness.

And give glory and thanks to the Triune God,

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for seeking you first

and making you a part of His Kingdom in Holy Baptism

through Jesus' righteousness.

In your Baptism, you became the heir of God's eternal kingdom.

You became the spiritual 1%, as it were.

You have riches beyond your wildest dreams,

more than you will ever be able to exhaust in your lifetime.

And yet, in God's grace, He allows you to live a regular life,

a prince in pauper's clothing, with troubles and cares

to keep you seeking His kingdom first and above all.

And what of the rest of the things we need? Jesus tells us,

and all these things shall be added to you.

This is a promise from the One who has taken care of your

most important need, the salvation of your eternal soul

and the resurrection of your body to life everlasting.

Do you suppose that after dying to save you,

He will now neglect you?

No, my fellow redeemed, He does not neglect you,

but mercifully provides the blessings He knows you need

for your spiritual health and life.

Is this some anonymous god not worth mentioning at the table?

No, He is too gracious for us to keep His name silent.

Today is a wonderful day to invoke His name

and list some of His many blessings.

May God the Father open your eyes

to see how He richly and daily provides for and protects you.

May God the Son lavish upon you the forgiveness He died

so willingly to earn for you.

And may God the Holy Spirit open your heart

to receive all these blessings with thanksgiving and joy.

Let us rise and join in singing the Trinitarian Doxology, hymn #592.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host:

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria