

Monday, November 11, 2024
Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Always. Without Ceasing. In All Circumstances

“16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thess 5:16-18

Always.

Without ceasing.

In all circumstances.

Paul seems to be making a point! Our eyes might first turn to “Rejoice...pray...give thanks,” but the descriptions of when to do these things struck me most as we begin three weeks of thinking about gratitude.

Always. Without ceasing. In all circumstances.

Why? In this sin-twisted world, we could look at our world and “Frown always, complain without ceasing, and question God in light of all circumstances.” This seems to be the way of the world, and we can understand where such a sour attitude comes from, if our focus is only on the circumstances of the day.

But we have reason to rejoice for our Savior forgives always and lives always. We can pray without ceasing for He invites us to bring every request to our Lord (Phil. 4:6-7). And this leads to gratitude in all things. This doesn't mean all things are good. No! Evil is real and abundant, but our Lord is greater. Our Lord has faced all evil and defeated it for us and our salvation. He knows your sin and paid for it. He knows your struggles and walks with you through them.

You can give thanks in all circumstances for your Savior has overcome every trial for you, and your Savior has given you every good thing in time and eternity. Every moment presents an opportunity for gratitude to our great, eternal, merciful Lord Jesus.

Always. Without ceasing. In all circumstances. (Including yours right now!)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank You for dying for me, rising for me, forgiving me, and walking with me through every moment from now to eternity. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, November 12, 2024

Read Romans 16:3-4

Happiness Comes From God

“Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.” (Romans 16:3-4)

Happiness comes to share with me Joy and an appreciation of all that God provides me. Salvation, oh, that ranks up there on the topic, without salvation, I have nothing; so, yes, that lies at the core of my happiness. But there is more.

As God saves me, He changes the way I am and live, where before I looked out for myself, now I find more interest in helping others. Helping others, not for the glory and appreciation they might show, but with joy in the recognition that another of God’s family participates in the same way I find joy, in Jesus Christ.

But there is still more. God provides people around me, people who love God and who are happy and willing to serve Him by assisting me also. They may give me direct portions or physical assistance. Others of them stand in my place, warding off dangers and damages I am often not even aware of. Yes, they too are part of my happiness.

There are those whose words have instructed me, whose words have given me comfort, and who have shared with me some of my sorrows, losses, and worries. My happiness includes them too, as I would not be here today were they not ready and willing to be used by our God to stand with and before me.

My happiness comes from God, who adds to it constantly with new revelations of how He and his support me and rejoice with me. I am happy!

Prayer: Thank you, O LORD, for the joy You share with me. I especially thank You for those who reach out to share my life with you and me. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, November 13, 2024

Read Psalm 100:4

Thank, Praise, and Bless His Name

“Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him; bless His Name!”

Psalm 100:4

Thank, Praise, and Bless who? Yahweh God of course, who made us. His gates and courts are His, and His Name is His—Yahweh. Jesus –*Yah[weh] is salvation/opulent*, is where Yahweh’s Name is “I AM,” and in thanks, praise, and blessing to Him we say, “HE IS.” Basically, everything is His—Jesus the Christ, our God and King, who lives and rules with the Father and the Holy Spirit! So, with the psalm writer, **“Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him; bless His Name.”**

It may be misunderstood that the only place to thank, praise, and bless Yahweh God is in a building, Namely, the Temple in the context of the Temple in Jerusalem or today’s sanctuaries set apart for Divine Service. And yes to both, then and now. We should thank, praise, and bless His Name everywhere, and (in) and at “church” Service where Christ comes to serve us in His Word and Sacrament. And so, Jesus is the Temple of God, and we are His Church wherever we are, and where we are - is all God’s, and therefore, everything is His.

So we thank, praise, and bless Jesus Christ wherever we are, and when we come together in fellowship in His Name at Divine Service, where He fills us up with His heavenly food.

St. Augustine wrote on this psalm verse, *“Think not that ye faint in praising Him. Your praise of Him is like food: the more ye praise Him, the more ye acquire strength, and He whom ye praise becometh the more sweet.”*

Prayer – Lord Jesus, grant us faith to praise You and enter Your gates and courts with thanksgiving and Bless Your Name always. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, November 14, 2024

Text: Revelation 7:9-12

His People

Thank God for bringing us into His fold and making us His people!

In our text for today, John describes a beautiful, glorious scene. On the final day, when Jesus comes again to ultimately reclaim and restore His creation, all of His people will gather around His throne and celebrate. They will be singing praises and bowing down in worship and waving palm branches – banners of victory. They will be clothed in brilliant, pure white robes having been washed by the cleansing blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Himself. Their number will be so great that no one could possibly count them except for God alone. And these people will *live* with God for all of time never again tasting death, fear, or pain. This is the beautiful future that God has in store for His people!

And because of the grace of God, you and I are among that number. Jesus went to the cross and paid the price of sin so that you don't have to. He shed His blood as a sacrificial lamb so that you can be clean. He gives His Word in baptism so that you can be covered in His righteousness and claimed as His own. And He rose from the grave so that you also will rise from the grave one day. Jesus has done everything for us – He's even given us the faith to believe. And because of that, He has brought us into His fold. We are among His people. When Jesus comes again and the events of John's vision take place – when God's people from countless nations gather, wearing white robes and worshipping Jesus – you and I will be there. We will gather around the throne. We will see Jesus face to face. We will live and breathe again clothed in robes of pure, brilliant white. This is what God has in store for His people. This is what God has in store for *us*. Thanks be to God!

Prayer: Jesus, you have made me yours. You have clothed me with your very own righteousness and promise me life like yours. Help me to stay firm in this faith, so that I, along with all the other saints, may celebrate around your throne when you return. In your holy name, amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, November 15, 2024

Read Psalm 30:4-5

Song of Praise and Thanks

“4 Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. 5 For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.” (Psalm 30:4-5 ESV).

Even though I am not very musically inclined it is still one of my favorite things when in church or in chapel at the seminary we all sing together. I love when we all join together in a well-known hymn, and we are all able to sing together loudly. Singing together is something that the people of God have always done but that doesn't always make it easy. Sometimes singing praises to the Lord is hard. It's hard when we have gone through something hard to then go and sing with joy. In those moments it is hard to sing for joy and the start of this psalm might stick in our throat, but the next verse of the psalm comes to the rescue.

The next verse speaks to us in our hard times and gives us a reason for the praises that came before it. In verse five we hear about the anger of the Lord and about weeping which as sinners we are well acquainted with, but it also tells us about what comes after. We are promised more than just the anger and the weeping that we see now, we are promised that the favor of God is lifelong. We get the assurance from God that night will give way, and morning will come which is always when God gives hope to His people, Easter morning being the prime example. On those days when singing praise to the Lord is hard to do, we still have the hope that is promised to us that as God's people His favor is with us because of Christ, and that every morning, He is still God for us no matter what happens.

Prayer: Lord have mercy on us when we are in the dark and protect us while we wait for the morning that You will bring with You when you return. Help us to sing praises even now as we look forward to the day when we will be with You forever. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Zach Johnson

Saturday, November 16, 2024

Read [Colossians 4:2](#)

“Prayer, with Thanksgiving”

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

This is a pretty cryptic statement, inserted along with some other urgent directions at the beginning of the closing of Paul’s letter to the Colossians. How can one be watchful in prayer by using thanksgiving? The immediate context doesn’t help explain what he means, but if you go back to Paul’s opening remarks, it becomes clear. He gives a perfect example of this in chapter 1:3-5:

“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel.”

Remember, Paul is a prisoner in Rome at the time he wrote this. It would be easy to become overcome with despair as he looked at the guard on the other end of his chain. He had a great deal of freedom to see visitors and do anything he could (while being chained to someone), but a few years of imprisonment before arriving in Rome and now a couple more, had to wear on him.

With this in mind, Paul’s statement of thankfulness due to the faith, hope, and love of the Colossians points out what is sustaining him in his captivity. He hears stories of their love for their neighbors that arises in them because of faith in Jesus which gives them hope for heaven. This reminds Paul of that same love and hope that he has experienced, ever since Jesus filled him with faith on the road to Damascus. The shackles on his leg don’t disappear as his heart fills with thankfulness, but God’s love for him watches over his prayer and guides his petitions.

This thanksgiving he has isn’t just a distraction that hides his plight from his thoughts; it reminds him of why he’s “OK” with being in chains. He’s been given the opportunity to share God’s love with many people, including the Colossians, and the Holy Spirit is moving mountains through Paul’s preaching. Paul’s thankfulness for the grace God has shown him – turning him from a murderous, enemy of God into God’s Apostle to the Gentiles – guides him in writing and praying for these brothers and sisters in Christ.

You and I, too, can look to our faith, hope, and love and to that of other Christians and overflow with thanksgiving to our God. A beautiful sunrise, a tasty meal, a friendly smile can also serve as reminders of some of God’s other gifts to inspire thankfulness. When you’re confronted with such a scene, pray steadfastly, being watchful with thanksgiving.

We pray: All the world is God’s own field, Fruit unto His praise to yield; Wheat and tares together sown, Unto joy or sorrow grown. First, the blade and then the ear, Then the full corn shall appear. Lord of harvest, grant that we Wholesome grain and pure may be. Amen. LSB 892, verse 2

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, November 18, 2024

Read Ezra 3:10-13

The Mix of Weeping and Thanks

“But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers’ houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people’s weeping.” Ezra 3:12-13a

Joyous songs and cheers of thanksgiving mixed with weeping – each so loud that you couldn’t sort out the sounds. This must have been quite a scene.

Less than 2 years after Cyrus of Persia allowed the people of Israel to go back home. Fifty years have passed since the temple was destroyed and Jerusalem was emptied on account of God’s people ignoring His word. The new temple would not be as grand as the ornate structure of Solomon, but the new foundation spoke of the promise of the temple. The promise? God would dwell in the midst of His people.

So why the tears amidst the cheers of gratitude?

There likely was some nostalgia for the glorious building of their childhood, but that doesn’t explain the depth of their reaction. Perhaps more likely is remorse, as the sin of the people had led to the previous temple being pulled down entirely. What is the right reaction to the new foundation? I would say this (thanks AND tears) is the right reaction to seeing the cost and mercy of God for His people.

This mixture is rightly ours when we look to the foundation of God’s presence with us – the death of Jesus on the cross. We are rightly sometimes overcome with grief knowing that our sin, our disregard for God’s Word, our rebellion against the One who gives us all things made necessary Jesus’ death.

But in gazing upon the cross, we cannot stay in weeping and remorse, for Christ Jesus was torn down for us. Not just because of us. For us and our salvation, in order to make us God’s own, make us holy, prepared to be in God’s presence – this is why Christ came to be torn down. And in His resurrection, He is the foundation of our peace with God. He is the foundation of life as we share in His never-ending life. He is the foundation of His Church. He has done all FOR US! There is no greater reason thanks.

Prayer: Give thanks to the Lord! For his steadfast love (FOR US!) endures forever!
Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Read 2 Corinthians 4:15

A Blessing to Give Thanks

“For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God..” (2 Cor. 4:15)

What a blessing to be able to give thanks! I could not give thanks to anyone if I were so proud to think I did it all myself. But that is my usual failure. I want to think enough of myself that I don't need to give thanks since, in my selfish dreams I am sure that even if I didn't do it myself, I could have. But in that gross rewriting of my relationship with God, I try to destroy the relationship.

Pride, oh, how I need and want to be rid of it! How I fail, but am forgiven, accepted, and restored by my God. All that before I give thanks. Yes, it is a blessing to be able to give thanks.

Then, I recognize that I have received so much for which I can give thanks. I find myself so unobservant, so short-sighted that when God gives me oodles of things I don't even notice it. So, I find that noticing what I have been given is itself a blessing deserving of being thanked. How I need that regular dose of God's Word to remind me of the many things and ways He provides for me.

And then, how to give thanks? There is a blessing in the ability to speak (in words and/or thoughts), to just stop for a minute and say: “Thank You.” There is living a gratitude to God for being there, and also for sharing with me. I run out of ways to express thanks!

Prayer: Thank you, God. Oh, Thank you. You shower blessings on me - more than I can remember to thank you – so, thank you for them all! Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, November 20, 2024

Read 2 Corinthians 9:15

Thanks

“Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!”

2 Corinthians 9:15

Thanks be to GOD! That is responsiveness to GOD’s grace in Christ. We usually respond this way after Old Testament and Epistle Scripture readings in the Divine Service; And when you sometimes hear, “Go in Peace and serve the LORD with joy,” the response to this statement of grace—forgiveness of sins in Christ—Peace, is “Thanks be to God!” Because thanks belong to Him. So, “Thanks be to GOD” and “Thanks be to GOD for His inexpressible gift!”

St. John Chrysostom wrote, “And here he calls “gift,” even those so many good things which are wrought by almsgiving [Christian love in giving to those in need], both to them that receive and them that give; or else, those unspeakable good things which through His advent He gave unto the whole world with great munificence [bountifulness], which one may suspect to be the most probable. For that he may at once both sober, and make them more liberal [free], he puts them in mind of the benefits they had received from God. For this avails very greatly in inciting unto all virtue; and therefore he concluded his discourse with it. But if His Gift be unspeakable, what can match their frenzy who raise curious questions as to His Essence? But not only is His Gift unspeakable, but that “peace” also “passeth all understanding,” (Phil. 4:7) whereby He reconciled the things which are above with those which are below.”.

GOD’s Peace is yours in Christ Jesus—Who IS our Peace.

Prayer – *Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift*—our Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Peace. In His Name. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Text: Psalm 26:6-7

Washed Clean

By reading the rest of the psalm, we get the impression that David has been wrongly accused by his enemies of something immoral. David, then, pleads his case before God. As part of his evidence supporting his innocence, David announces that his hands have been washed, and he is clean.

It's probable that what David has in mind is the law God that gave to Aaron and his priests in Exodus 30:17-21. In Exodus, God declares that all who approach His dwelling place need to wash their hands and feet so that they do not approach God in an unclean (unworthy) manner. Indeed, to approach God without clean hands meant certain death. This is, therefore, very strong evidence for David. Not only does he claim that his hands are washed clean, but he is physically walking around God's altar. If David were unclean, doing so would kill him! We don't know what his enemies accused him of, but we can be absolutely certain that David was innocent!

How comforting it is that these words illustrating David's triumph illustrate our triumph through Jesus, as well. We have a persistent accuser, Satan, who is constantly trying to make us appear guilty before God. But Jesus, our great high priest, has acquitted us of all charges. He has washed us clean in the waters of baptism. Like David, when the day of judgement comes, we will stand before the throne of God, and we will be declared "Not Guilty". And then, with David, we will dwell around His altar eternally.

But this is also a reality that we enjoy now. Presently, when we gather together as the church, we celebrate around God's altar. When we hear the Word proclaimed and taste the feast of His body and blood, we celebrate around God's altar. When we pray together and read Scripture, we celebrate around God's altar. Jesus has made us clean! Now, let us daily celebrate around His altar in thanksgiving!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You created all things and govern all of Your creation. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ into this world. Thank You for the gift of forgiveness and grace that He has given me. Empower me to sing thanks to You in all that I say and do. In Jesus' name, amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, November 22, 2024

Text: Daniel 6:10

Thankful in Times of Need

“When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he had done previously.” (Daniel 6:10 ESV).

In the sixth chapter of Daniel, we learn about how important Daniel has become to the Persian kingdom. The Jews are still in exile at this point, but Daniel has done well for himself, and God has helped him. Daniel had become very powerful in the Persian kingdom and the king was even planning to make Daniel the man in charge of the whole kingdom because of how well he managed what the king had given him. Because of Daniel’s success, his enemies wanted to find a way to remove him from his high position and the scheme that they came up with was to accuse Daniel on account of his faithfulness to God. The king was convinced to pass a law that prevented the worship of anything other than the king but Daniel even after the law was passed still maintained his faithful worship of God in his own home.

Daniel knew that the punishment for his disobedience would be the lion's den and many of us are familiar with the story of Daniel in the lion’s den, but I bet we are less familiar with the faithfulness of Daniel that put him in the lion’s den. Daniel’s obedience to God came as a result of God’s faithfulness to Daniel and God continued to be faithful to Daniel when He saved Daniel from the lion’s den. This whole story demonstrates God’s faithfulness to Daniel as God gave him everything he needed and more. God took care of Daniel and when Daniel was thrown to the lions for his faithfulness God still took care of him and protected him. Just like God’s faithfulness to Daniel never ended God’s faithfulness to His people never ends. God eventually brought His people out of exile and back into the promised land but even more than that God kept His promise to send a Savior and that Savior wasn’t just for the remnant of the Jews that came back from the exile but also for us and when we consider God’s faithfulness to us in Christ we can look at how God took care of Daniel and recognize that He has always cared for his people.

Prayer: Lord be with us and help us to recognize that You are faithful to us just as You were faithful to Daniel. Lead us to trust You and always call to You in our times of need. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Zach Johnson

Saturday, November 23, 2024

Read [Psalm 136](#)

“His steadfast love endures forever.”

*“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever.*

*Give thanks to the God of gods,
for his steadfast love endures forever.*

*Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
for his steadfast love endures forever.” Ps 136 1-3*

We’re getting a new washing machine. The manufacturer is so confident of their product, they warranty it for a year (certain parts for 10 years). For “just” a quarter of the price of the washer, we could extend that year to 5 years. Hyundai, Kia, and Mitsubishi all warrant the powertrains of their cars to 10 years/100,000 miles. I once worked with a guy whose wife was a “Longevity Engineer” for a car manufacturer. Sounds like someone whose specialty is to design the car to last as long as possible, right? No, he explained, her job was to design everything to last until just after the warranty expired.

This makes our Psalm all the more astounding: “Forever”. God’s steadfast love endures forever. In the link above, I included the entire Psalm; our assigned reading is just the verses above. But this amazing “warranty” is repeated 26 times in the entire chapter! The format is a line describing our God, followed by this same line: *For his steadfast love endures forever.* (*Repetition is how we learn.*)

God’s steadfast love (or “goodness”, or “mercy”) existed before Creation. It was demonstrated to Adam and Eve, to David, to Mary Magdalene, to us, and on to eternity. This “warranty” has no cost – it’s a part of God’s nature; it’s a part of His eternal Being. And He has shared this with all people, including you and me.

These opening three verses remind us to thank our God because of His limitless love. It starts by identifying the Name of the True God, Yahweh, then repeats twice for a trinitarian three times, using different superlative Names that highlight His greatness. “God of gods, Lord of lords” – this way of speaking in Hebrew means the highest God, the most powerful Lord. These were the words that Moses used to describe God after spending a second 40 days on the Mountain of God to receive the second copy of the Ten Commandments.

Read the entire Psalm – remind yourself of His Creative works, His mighty deeds of deliverance, His aid to His people, and His care for the powerless. Then, add your own verses: recall God’s blessings to you, one at a time, followed by “*For his steadfast love endures forever.*” Give Thanks!

We pray: LORD, I offer my thanks to You for Your unending, eternal mercy, love, and goodness. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson

Monday, November 25, 2024
Read 1 Corinthians 15:56-57

Given the Victory

“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 15:56-57

During these weeks as we have been considering our many reasons for thanks, it becomes overwhelming to list all the blessings that our God has showered upon us.

Yet today’s reason for thanks is at the top of the list for two important reasons. First, it is the greatest thing we could be given – victory over sin and death. The gift is eternal life, and for this gift we can never say thank you enough. This leads to reason number two, it’s something we must be given.

At some point in life, everyone has the experience of being given a victory. Usually, it is a parent or grandparent letting you win a fun, but meaningless game. We might appreciate the victory, but it does cheapen the accomplishment. In our pride, we can become defensive because “I didn’t get the chance to earn it.”

But there is no place for such pride when speaking of the gifts from God, especially this one! The point is that we could not earn this victory. Sin and death would win every time. So, Christ has fought these enemies for us and won. He gives (gifts!) to us a victory that we would never accomplish. Yet because He gives it to us, the victory is truly ours. In the face of our constant failings and the reality of death, we are victorious thanks to Jesus' victory for us.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I can never fully thank You for giving me a share in Your victory over sin and death! Give me a grateful heart that thanks You for all your blessings to me, but help me always to keep this one at the top of the list. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jason

Tuesday, November 26, 2024

Read Psalm 18:1-3, 46-49

The Security of Christ

Life can be hard, with troubles coming from lacks and excesses; from needs unfulfilled to security and uses for extra possessions. But one of the biggest problems that I face are those coming from others. There are others who dislike me, and seek to punish me for that silly reason.

The world seeks to entice me into confronting and defeating those enemies, those people who would do harm to me. It feels so proper and so easy to accomplish, just strike at them, preventing them from harming me, and maybe even deterring them from repeating.

Always the temptation comes to leave my Lord and seek to solve things my way. How I feel that desire, that rage building up in my heart. How I need to return to my Lord and plead with Him. Yes, plead with Him to restrain my desire, to teach me to care more about what is right than about what serves me best.

But I feel His comfort, His reminder that He too has suffered such things, even more than me. He comes to me with His Word, the reminder that His Bible has the words I need, the ideas that turn my life upside down, that make me want and able to live like my Lord, like Jesus.

Do good to others, like He did - praying for those who nailed Him to a cross. Like He speaking in love to the thief who started speaking harshly to Him, only to listen and end up accepting life from Him at the last minute.

Prayer: Thank you Jesus for being the security for me, for guiding my heart into loving others like You, for giving me the ability to help even those who hate me. Amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Pastor Art Bolstad

Wednesday, November 27, 2024

Read Colossians 1:3-6

Always-Thank-God

“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.”

Colossians 1:3

We always thank God in trinity and unity in relation to the Father and the Son through the Spirit.

“Thus, the Father is Lord [God [(almighty)]; the Son is Lord [God [(almighty)]; and the Holy Spirit is Lord [God [(almighty)]—and yet there are no three lords but, One Lord [God [(almighty)]]. For just as we are compelled by the Christian truth to confess that each distinct person is God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the catholic religion to say there are three gods or three lords” (Athanasian Creed). We believe, teach, and confess this is the One True God revealed by grace through faith alone in Christ Jesus our Lord. The living and active Word is performative (acting among us and in us through faith)—the Word comes to us in the Eternal Son of God incarnate (pre-incarnate), spoken (proclaimed), and written (handed down and preserved, Holy Scriptures – Bible).

We always thank God the Father of our Lord Jesus (He/Yahweh is Salvation!) Christ—always in the Holy Spirit, praying for all the saints—our fellow Christian brothers and sisters near and far.

Paul addresses the saints and faithful brothers in Christ in Colossae in his thanksgiving “always” to God the Father when praying for these saints in the Lord Jesus (He is Salvation!) Christ. Paul and Timothy (Tychicus and Epaphroditus) are the “we” involved, the ones praying and hearing (corresponding) of the faith and hope (laid up in heaven) of the Word of Truth and the grace of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Colossae, bearing fruit and multiplying in the world. What a beautiful word of thanks and praise to our God and prayers and love for the saints as the Gospel bears fruit in all the world!

St. John Chrysostom said in a sermon on this passage, “As also [the Gospel] is in all the world.” It is present everywhere, everywhere victorious, everywhere established. “And is bearing fruit, and increasing, as it doth in you also.” “Bearing fruit.” In works. “Increasing.” By the accession of many, by becoming firmer; for plants then begin to thicken when they have become firm. “As also among you,” says he. He first gains the hearer by his praises, so that even though disinclined, he may not refuse to hear him. “Since the day ye heard it.” Marvelous! that ye quickly came unto [the Gospel] and believed; and straightway, from the very first, showed forth its fruits. “Since the day ye heard, and knew the grace of God in truth.”

Prayer – Lord Jesus, You are Salvation for us and all mankind. We thank the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that the Gospel Truth and grace of that Gospel have gone into the world bearing fruit. Help us spread the Gospel to all people near and far today, always thanking God and praying for each other. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Nathan Tritch

Thursday, November 28, 2024

Text: 1 Chronicles 16:8-12

Happy Thanksgiving

Happy Thanksgiving! For some, this is a day of great celebration and comfort. Maybe you plan to gather around the dinner table with family and friends today. Maybe you plan to eat turkey and pie, watch football, and play games. Maybe you are traveling to spend time with extended family. Maybe family members are traveling to visit you. For others, this isn't such a day of great celebration and comfort. For some this is a day of loneliness, sadness, and regret.

On the surface, these two experiences of Thanksgiving Day couldn't be more different. But in reality, there is one way in which these two approaches to Thanksgiving are similar – they're both focused on material things.

When looking at the things that we own or the stuff that we can buy, everyone falls into one of two camps: either you have possessions to be thankful for or you do not. The celebration of Thanksgiving that we are familiar with is typically focused on these possessions.

However, we as Christians celebrate more than just material possessions. We have a God, The Father, who loves us so much that He gave up his own Son for us. We have a Savior, Jesus, who came into our world and gave himself up for us. We have a Comforter, The Holy Spirit, who protects us and keeps us in the faith of Jesus. This is what we are *truly* thankful for on this day and every day.

So, whether you have material things for which to be thankful or not, remember that The Father loves you, Jesus forgives you, and The Spirit is with you. Remember that you have a God who lives *for you*. Remember who you are and whose you are and have a happy Thanksgiving.

Prayer: God, You have done great things for me. Your presence is all that I need. Help me to live this day and every day that comes after in thanksgiving to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

Today's Devotion was written by Seminarian Micah Brown

Friday, November 29, 2024

Read: Ephesians 1:15-18

Remembering Gratitude

“For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,” (Ephesians 1:15-18 ESV).

Yesterday was Thanksgiving which means that over the last few days, most of us have been thinking about the things that we are thankful for. We’ve been enjoying food and family and friends, but now on the day after, we may be tempted to go back to some kind of normal which too often means that we forget to be grateful altogether. The text for today draws us back into that gratitude that we are so excited about one day but then the next we forget about. In this text, Paul says that he gives thanks without ceasing. It’s hard to imagine what this looks like; we spend so much of our time wanting things and forgetting about the blessings that are ours already that we can’t even imagine what it looks like to be thankful all the time. Paul pulls us out of our casual forgetfulness and reminds us of the blessings that are ours in Christ.

Paul points us toward the riches and the glorious inheritance that are ours on account of Christ. He reminds us that we are saints loved by God and blessed with the Holy Spirit. Today as we think back on the things that we were thankful for yesterday we can remember also the things that we have received from God on account of Christ. This is the thankfulness that Paul lived in, and it’s what he wanted the Ephesians to remember. Now that Thanksgiving is over, we could easily go back to our normal thinking and forget most of the gratitude that we practiced yesterday, or we could choose to live in gratitude. As someone who has been redeemed by the work and love of Christ you have a choice to make, are you going to live in gratitude every day for all that Christ has won you or will you forget and set gratitude aside? I pray that we will all be like Paul and offer ceaseless thanksgiving to God our Father.

Prayer: Father, thank you for all of the blessings that You have given us, and thank you for each day that we are able to remember with grateful hearts all that You have done. Help us always to glorify You by remembering Your love for us. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Today’s Devotion was written by Seminarian Zach Johnson

Saturday, November 30, 2024

Read [1 Timothy 4:4-5](#)

“Thank God”

“For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.”

Whew! Made it through another Thanksgiving! Here in our devotions, we’ve been talking about being thankful to God for the countless blessings He continues to shower us with, and today is the last devotion on the subject. Thursday, most of us probably even ate a feast to culminate this remembrance. Be honest, now – did you like everything that was on the Thanksgiving table? Did you take a piece of pumpkin pie? Or did you pass that on, as you don’t really like that. Brussel sprouts? Asparagus? Pumpkin-spice flavored cocoa?

Today’s reading tells us that everything that God has created is good and should be enjoyed by us in thankfulness. We might be embarrassed to say we don’t like some of God’s gifts just because they don’t taste good to us, but we reluctantly admit to ourselves that they are good because of Who provided them to us. So, we thank God for them – on behalf of those who do like them.

1st Timothy was written to Timothy, a young pastor who Paul had trained. Just prior to our reading, Paul had cautioned Timothy to keep his eyes out for people in the church who add rules to Christian living that go beyond what God’s Word says. Specifically, he warned against those who would say that marriage or certain foods must be avoided to remain holy and in God’s graces.

Our reading is Paul’s response to this false teaching. God created everything in the world for people to enjoy (and care for) and when He finished, God Himself declared them “very good”. He created Man and Woman and gave them to one another to help each other and find joy together. That, too, is “very good”.

We aren’t “made holy” by challenging ourselves with food or marriage restrictions; Jesus’ death and resurrection made us holy. But we can make God’s gifts to us “holy” (which means to be appointed for a certain purpose) by seeing His gifts to us through them and to return thanks for these gifts. We are using God’s gifts for their intended holy purpose – to point us to Him as their Creator and Provider. And this reading describes thankfulness itself – to hear God’s Word and respond in faith by remembering Him in prayer and daily living.

Artificial pumpkin spice flavoring, created in dark laboratories by sinister elves may not be something good created by God, but everything else is, like it or not. Thank You, God!

We pray:

*Now thank we all our God With hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, In whom His world rejoices;
Who from our mothers’ arms Has blest us on our way
With countless gifts of love And still is ours today. Amen. LSB 895*

Today’s Devotion was written by Pastor Jeff Nelson