

SERMON

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Immanuel Lutheran Church, Bartlett, IL
Pentecost 18, C - October 12, 2025
LWML Sunday

Ruth 1:1-19a Psalm 34:1-5, 17-19, 22 2 Timothy 2:1-13 Luke
17:11-19

“Praise the Lord! For it is GOOD to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.....” “Sing to the Lord **with thanksgiving...**”

Words from the Psalms, the hymnbook of our Lord Jesus.

And,

“**In fervent gratitude** for the Savior’s dying love and His blood-bought gift of redemption, we dedicate ourselves to Him....”

Words from the Lutheran Women’s Missionary Association,

- the LWML,

- a pledge in which we will join later in this Service.

And similar words of Christians throughout the ages.

- Martin Luther began each of our catechism’s

- morning and evening prayers with

“**I thank You**, my Heavenly Father.”

Giving thanks.

- It’s always refreshing to the soul.

- But too often it is also difficult for us.

- We forget to do it,
- or we just plain have trouble being thankful--
- maybe because we have loads of problems.

But the fact is that for Christians

- there is never a reason not to be thankful.

We have a loving God

- who cares about us so much
- He has sent us His beloved Son--
- a reality that is far greater than any anxiety we may be feeling
- or anything else that would possibly seem
- to stand in the way of offering heartfelt thanks to God.

There are many, many more reasons for us to give thanks

- than feeling like it's something we are forced to do
- as if it is only a duty for us to perform
- if we are to please God,

But first of all, let's be clear that God does not need our thanksgivings.

- He is whole and complete in Himself.
- Giving thanks to God is good FOR US.

One author summarized some of those

- positive reasons for giving thanks like this:

“Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life.

“It turns what we HAVE into ENOUGH, and more ...”

Another author writes,

“Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow.” - *Melody Beattie*

Baptist Pastor Charles Stanley, writes,

“Gratitude releases us from anxiety.

“Thanksgiving reinforces our faith--

- as we look back and recognize God’s faithfulness,

- our confidence in Him grows. And,

“Praising and thanking the Lord refreshes our relationship with Him.”

On the other hand:

- Ingratitude and failure to give thanks deadens our spiritual life.

- Often it is allowing a worry or a problem

- to become bigger than God in our eyes--

- and that is idolatry-- in effect, worship of a false God

So, both Old and New Testaments urge us again and again

- by words and examples

- to offer thanks to God:

“Give thanks to the Lord, for HE IS GOOD; for His steadfast love endures forever.”

- From the O.T., Psalm 136 and repeated many other places

The theme continues in the New Testament in Jesus own teaching and that of the apostles.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with THANKSGIVING let your requests be made known to God.”

- Philippians 4

Notice two things about those passages:

Psalms 136 assumes that the Lord is good as the basis of thanksgiving.

- His steadfast, or faithful, love lasts FOREVER.
- It never disappears even when we can't see it or feel it,
- just as the sun is still shining even when clouds hide it.
- He remains faithful even when we have been faithless.
- True and consistent thanksgiving involves our being certain of that.

The Philippians passage begins, “Do not be anxious.”

- Letting the cold winds of worry and anxiety have their way with us
- is like putting our hearts into a freezer.
- Worry and anxiety are sure signs
- that we are doubting or forgetting that the Lord is good.
- Worry needs to be like a gymnasium's buzzer going off in our souls
- that tells us it's time RIGHT NOW to say a prayer of thanks.....

But what is needed for us to be able to do that--

- to create a change of behavior

- for us who so easily have problems with thanksgiving?

Well, what is it that might hold us back?

Would it not be our hearts questioning whether

- we can really trust God with our problems?...

Worry is CLEARLY contrary to God's will for our lives--

- contrary to the words of Jesus Himself.

- who more than once said,

“Do not worry!”

and also,

“Do not be afraid.”

Worry, with the fear that is bound up in it,

- is truly is a **sin** that calls for repentance

- since it is directly contrary to how Jesus teaches us to live.

And actually identifying worry as a sin

- for which repentance is needed

- is very helpful.

- Calling it the sin it is,

- asking for the forgiveness which Christ has already won,

- and then letting it go--

- letting worry die so that a new heart

- can take the place of the damaged one,
- much like a transplant--
- that kind of repentance....

There was an especially difficult time in my own life

- in which I had been praying and praying and praying for God's help.
- And actually feeling like a person under some kind of Satanic assault.
- The whole experience was exhausting
- to the point of threatening my health.

But through that struggling I learned

- to face difficulties more faithfully and productively.

Bottom line is that now when I begin to pray about

- something that is deeply troubling me
- or even threatening my well-being,

I **begin** with the words

“Thank You”.

Those words chase away gloom,

- lead me to remember many of God's promises
- which then become the source of unending strength.

For example:

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” (Psalm 23:1)
His care is already there.

- He will work things out in ways that will be best for us
- as hard as it is for us to see or understand.
- We truly already have everything we need.

Or the passage from St. Peter's letter,

“Cast all your cares upon Him; for He CARES for you.” (1 Peter 5:7)

- again, present tense.

And these words from Hebrews,

“*For* God has said, ‘I will NEVER leave you; I will never forsake you.’ Let us be bold then and say, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid.’”
(Hebrews 13:5-6)

I also often recall how in Romans 8, St. Paul writes that

- ALL things work together for good for those who love God--
- those whom He has called for His purposes.
- And how the God who sent His beloved Son
- for our biggest problem of all--
- to destroy the power of sin over us--
- **that** God can certainly be trusted
- to provide for all our other needs.

There is no bigger worry-lifter than that knowledge.

The bright love of God that is in Christ Jesus

- pierces through the deepest gloom.

- It's warmth touches the coldest heart.
- It makes possible thanksgiving in every circumstance.

And what was the EXAMPLE of Jesus for us?

- On the very night when He was betrayed,
- when things had never been worse,
- He took the bread and wine AND GAVE THANKS.

“Do **this** in remembrance of Me,”

He said.....

- as He pointed to the divine love for us all
- that still flows from the Cross
- in the Sacrament of His very Body and Blood given and shed FOR US....

But what about our being so fickle--

- so that worries so easily return
- to trouble our minds and spirits and souls
- again and again
- resulting in new cases of
- cold, frosty, unthankful hearts.

How easy we can be made to feel so guilty

- that we feel unworthy to talk to God at all.

If we allow that to happen,

- it is to surrender to Satan and his own attacks on our souls

Again, from Romans 8, these words:

“Who will accuse God’s chosen people? God Himself declares them not guilty. Who, then, will condemn them? Not Christ Jesus, who died, or rather, who was raised to life and is at the right side of God, pleading with Him for us! Who then can separate us from the love of Christ? ...

“For I am certain that nothing can separate us from His love: neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers, neither the present nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below-- there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord.”...

Not even our fickleness and most miserable failures.

So....

- identify your worries,

- sort of tag them.

Then leave them with the Lord who loves you with love beyond imagining.

Do it in the silence when we pray for ourselves today....

Then leave this place with a clean, new, warmed and thankful heart--

- a heart that will have something like a deep, freezer-like darkness lifted

- so that you can see even more abundant blessings

- for which to give thanks wherever you go.

We don’t have to exist like a bunch of grumps

- who can see nothing good around us.

“It is good to give thanks to the Lord-- VERY good FOR YOU.”

And beyond that,

- good that you have every reason to do it,

- in every circumstance.

And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will keep your hearts and minds THANKFUL, in Christ Jesus for life everlasting. Amen.