

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

“O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever.” So writes the Psalmist in Psalm 136, where the refrain repeats 26 times: “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever.”

Each year we observe this day as a day of thanksgiving. It is a national holiday, although our nation does not agree on to whom or to what we give thanks. Many of our national forefathers believed in a god quite different from the God of Holy Scripture. Many who observe this day believe that the earth is their mother, so they are thankful for an organic higher power.

Many believe that there is a god of some kind, a generic and tamable god, but aren't bothered by their lack of relationship with him, or her, or it. Many pray to false gods like allah, or the god of the Mormons and Jehovah's witnesses, or Budda, or of the various false churches that men create. Many reject that there is a God at all. Many look to secular government as the source of their provision. A small number are bold to simply give thanks to the devil.

Not so the Psalmist. Not so the people of God. Not so the True Church. Our thanksgiving is not like the fallen world's thanksgiving. Theirs is not the thanksgiving that the Psalmist proclaims. The Psalmist gives thanks to the True God, who is thanked because He alone is good. He is the source of all goodness. Nothing is good apart from Him. And the Psalmist gives thanks for the manifestation of that divine goodness: His mercy endures forever.

The true God is merciful. He is not like the false gods of nature, or the many false gods of pagan religions or like secular governments. The true God is merciful. He is the source of all mercy. In Him alone is forgiveness. And apart from Him there is not mercy. That God, the Good God, the God of Mercy, is the God to whom the Psalmist gives thanks, the God to whom the Samaritan leper returned to give thanks.

As a Samaritan, that leper certainly had a different god. He had different priests. But that healed leper fell down on his face at Christ's feet, giving Him thanks. He worshipped Him. He humbled himself before Him. That is true thanksgiving. True thanksgiving is worship. True thanksgiving is worship of the only true God, the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Thanksgiving apart from that is idolatry.

Faith recognizes that all good things are from God, even those things that come to us through means. Yes, we are thankful for our parents, our family, and our friends. God be thanked, He has placed them in our lives. We are thankful that we live in a country that, for a time, freely allows Christian worship. That time may well end. But we are thankful to God while we enjoy it. But if it be taken away, we will still thank God for His goodness and mercy. That's what faith does. Whatever we receive, for that we thank God.

Faith daily gives thanks unto the Lord. Faith recognizes the manifold gifts that God, in His mercy, in His grace, in His goodness, daily bestows upon us. Faith thanks God that the sun rises each morning. Faith thanks God as our eyes open from slumber each new day. God has kept us during the night, and delivered us to a new morning, in which His mercies are new. So we rise

making the Sign of the Cross and praying “I thank Thee, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ Thy dear Son...” Faith celebrates thanksgiving every day.

Faith thanks God for food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, field, cattle, money, goods, a pious spouse, pious children, pious servants, pious and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like. And when the same are absent or lacking, faith still thanks God.

For as the Apostle writes, “...we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” Such is our thanksgiving. Our reward is not of this world. Our reward is in heaven. That reward cannot be taken away. That reward is sure, for Christ our Lord won it for us. For that we give thanks to God, the God who created us, the God who redeemed us, the God who sanctifies us.

We give thanks to God this day that He has declared us to be clean. He bespeaks us righteous. We were not clean. From birth we were soiled by sin. But in His goodness, in His mercy, God declares you to be clean because of Christ. As He healed the leper, so too has He healed you – with a Word, a Word that brings Christ to you, a Word that declares you clean.

In mercy He heals you by His Holy Wounds. He heals you with His shed Blood, the Blood He shed for you. He heals you with water, water that issued forth from His pierced side, water comprehended with His Word and Promise in the baptismal font. There He shows you that He is good. There He shows you true mercy.

He heals you as you are forgiven. He heals you as you are absolved. He heals you as you are restored. He heals you as you are declared to be holy and righteous in His sight. And being healed, you return to Him to give thanks. You do as that healed leper did - you worship Him. And He, the God of goodness and mercy, receives you in His grace, and then blesses you all the more.

The same God, the only true God, hears your prayers. He gives you your daily bread. He gives daily bread to the whole world, to those who worship Him, and to those who do not. He gives, that in the gift you come to see His loving hand, His gracious provision. He gives not because we are good, but because He is good. That is true mercy. He who gives gave His life for us. And He who gave His life for us gives to us the very blessings that keep and sustain us, body and soul. For that we gather in His presence this day. For that we give Him thanks.

And as you return here, this place that God has promised to be, to bring Him thanks, to worship Him, He blesses you all the more. He gives you to eat of the true Thanksgiving Meal, the Holy Eucharist. For on the night in which He was betrayed, He took bread and gave thanks. And in the same way also He took the Cup after supper and gave thanks. In His Holy Eucharist He makes His Body your Food. He makes His Blood your Drink.

In Christ, you are healed. Your faith has made you well. “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever.” A blessed Thanksgiving.

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