

November 27, 2008
 Messiah
 Thanksgiving Day - A

Luke 17:11-19
 "Return and Give Praise to God"

Introduction

1. You have probably heard the story many times
 2. How the Pilgrims set sail from England to the United States, and landed at Plymouth in 1620
 3. 102 Pilgrims landed on the shores of the new world in late fall – and over that first harsh Massachusetts winter, 50 of the Pilgrims died
 4. However, that next spring, the Native American tribes around them befriended these Pilgrims, taught them how to build homes, hunt for food, and grow gardens
 5. That fall of 1621, William Bradford, governor of the Plymouth Colony, declared a feast to occur in November, inviting their Indian friends, playing games, feasting on venison, squash, and more...
 6. But Bradford called for the feast first and foremost to GIVE THANKS TO GOD –
 - a. That Thanksgiving of 1621 was not to give thanks to the Native Americans
 - b. It was not to give thanks to the sun god of the Native Americans
 - c. That Thanksgiving of 1621 was called to give thanks to GOD for all his blessings and benefits
 - d. That day – William Bradford and the Pilgrims RETURNED AND GAVE PRAISE TO GOD
- I. Of course, the Pilgrim's Thanksgiving in 1621 was not the very first Thanksgiving ever for those who believe in God**
- A. Believers in the Triune God have given thanks to God from the time of creation
 - a. For Adam and Eve – who knew a perfect world without sin naturally thanked God, understood all things come from God, and would have been truly grateful to a God who is so good!
 - b. But since "The Fall" – giving thanks to God is a discipline, it is something we remember to do, and it is something we often fail to do
 - B. Have you seen commercials and shows, and heard philosophies and teachings that long for a perfect world?
 - a. Like the Walgreens commercials where everything goes right, everyone is happy, and bad things never happen
 - b. Or believers in global warming – who believe that we can "fix" the world and make it perfect by being "green"
 - c. In this kind of world – "utopia" some call it – there would be no reason for us to come to church to be reminded to "give thanks to God" – we would naturally do it
 - d. In this kind of perfect world – this sanctuary would be packed to the rafters – because we would all naturally pour into God's sanctuary to give Him thanks!

- C. But this is NOT a perfect world – it is fallen and broken, and our relationship with God is fractured and separated
- a. And so – we are reminded once again to RETURN and give Praise to God
 - b. In a fallen world – many Americans believe “thanksgiving” is being thankful to the TV networks for airing all-day football
 - c. In a fallen world – many Americans believe “thanksgiving” is being thankful for malls who will have massive sales tomorrow morning, sales that will “save us money”
 - d. In a fallen world – many Americans believe “thanksgiving” is being thankful for roast turkey, cream whipped potatoes, delicious fruit salad, and pumpkin pie
 - e. In a fallen world – many Americans believe “thanksgiving” is being thankful to family for filling our home with warmth and laughter
 - f. In spite of our enjoyment of all these things: football, malls, food, and family - these things are NOT thanksgiving!

II. Thanksgiving, TRUE THANKSGIVING, is “returning and giving praise to God”

- A. Look at the 10 Lepers in our Gospel Reading today
- a. There were 10 men who had this terrible disease of leprosy – a disease of the skin, and its complications led to being ostracized by the community, and could also lead to physical death
 - b. From a distance, these 10 men with this terrible disease, called to Jesus from afar, “Jesus, master, have mercy on us”
 - c. And in His mercy, and with His power of being God, Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priests, to show that they were cleansed – that they were healed
 - d. And on their way to the priests – suddenly these 10 men were cleansed
 - e. At some point, one of them, realized he was healed
 - f. And he realized WHO healed him
 - g. And he stopped, turned around, he RETURNED TO GIVE PRAISE TO GOD
- B. We were infected with a terrible disease – a disease of the soul, and its complication have led us to be ostracized by God and heaven, a disease which leads us to eternal death
- a. In our case, we did not even call for God from afar – we were so sick with sin we didn’t even know God, nor did we care about Him
 - b. In our case – God came to us, “while we were yet sinners, Christ came and died for us”
 - c. It is not in the nature of God to leave us for eternal death; it is not in the nature of God to see us damned eternally in hell
 - d. He came to earth as the holy child of Bethlehem, to be infected with our sin
 - i. On the cross it was Jesus who was ostracized by His own Father, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

- ii. On the cross, Jesus breathes His last and dies our death – in our place – to make us well
- iii. You, me, all of us, all the world – we have been healed by this Jesus Christ, who is True God and who is True Man
- iv. We did not cross the water of the Atlantic to enter a new land; but Christ has led us through the waters of Holy Baptism, and through that water we are led to the land of heaven, the kingdom of Jesus Christ

C. This is the reason for our Thanksgiving!

- a. Whoever realizes the enormity of this gift; whoever realizes the sacrifice of God coming to save us; whoever realizes the benefits of being raised from death to life eternally...
- b. WILL RETURN AND GIVE PRAISE TO GOD!

D. And it is this God, who not only saved us for all eternity – but who guards and keeps us on earth as well in all our physical needs

- a. In our Old Testament Reading, Moses is reminding the Israelites of how God is soon to bless the children of Israel with the “promised land” – a land flowing with milk and honey
 - i. Moses reminds the people to return and give thanks to God for leading Israel through the desert
 - ii. How God fed His people with Manna and Quail, when there seemed to be nothing to eat
 - iii. How God provided His people with clothing and caused their shoes not to wear out
 - iv. How God gave His 10 Commandments to His people in order to protect them from all evil
 - v. How God will soon give them a land bountiful and rich: bountiful and rich with water, and fountains, valleys, hills, wheat, barley, vines, figs, pomegranates, olive trees, honey, stones for building, iron, and copper, and more!
- b. And surely we can see how God has done the same for us – as He always does for His people of all time
 - i. In our Epistle Reading, Paul writes from prison for preaching Christ
 - ii. And He says, “give thanks to God at all times – weather in want or in plenty – give thanks”
 - iii. And so when we are going through the “deserts” of life: when money is tight, when our lives are a low, when we are anxious and depressed → God promises to lead us through “the desert” – He is with us
 - iv. Today we will feast, and yet everyday God gives us food to eat – He gives us our daily bread

- v. Look at the clothes we wear: made by mom, whether bought at American Eagle, ordered in from Eddie Bauer, or purchased at Aid Inc – God provides us with clothing and shoes
- vi. The commandments are for our benefit as well → where God protects us from damaged relationships, from destroying ourselves with envy and greed, and where God hears and answers our prayers – God’s commandments are a gift for which we are thankful
- vii. And the country in which we live – even our own state
 - 1. Wheat fields and sunflowers
 - 2. Rich in coal and a Bakken vein full of oil
 - 3. A land bountiful with deer and pheasants
 - 4. A land beautiful with rich dark soil, and rugged Bad Lands
 - 5. Lakes filled with fish, and water for drinking
 - 6. All for which we RETURN TODAY, AND EVERY DAY – AND PRAISE GOD!!!

Conclusion

1. The other night our family watched a movie on the Hallmark channel, “An Old-fashioned Thanksgiving”
2. Without going through the whole story line – thanksgiving was defined by “family togetherness”, health, relationships, and a wonderful “Old-fashioned” Thanksgiving feast with turkey and all the fixings...
3. Throughout the movie – there were basically 3 main prayers spoken...
 - a. Once to a statue head of a famous writer
 - b. Once, in time of crises, a girl runs outside and looks up to the sky and prays for help – but to whom she is praying is never named
 - c. And then at the Thanksgiving Feast at the end – where the family is thankful for various blessings – but again the “god” is never named
4. Our God is named: He is the Triune God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
 - a. This is the God who created us, and gives us all earthly blessings
 - b. This is the God, who in His greatest work, dies on the cross to saved us from all sin, death, and the devil
 - c. This is the God who keeps us in the faith by feeding us with Himself through Word and Sacrament
5. We know our God – and today we RETURN AND PRAISE HIM
6. This service is praise to God; our lives is a praise to God and to be lives of thanksLIVING
7. Yes, we have come to give thanks to the Lord our God, for HE IS GOOD! Amen.