

Thanksgiving – 2022

Deuteronomy 8:11-20, Psalm 65, Philippians 4:6-20, Luke 17:11-19

Let us Bless the Lord! And the congregation responds: Thanks be to God.

May the words from my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in Your sight O Lord our rock and redeemer. Amen.

Thanksgiving. The pilgrims made it popular. The children of Israel learned it through their life as God's people. The pilgrims escaped religious persecution. The Israelites escaped slavery in Egypt by God's Almighty hand. The pilgrims sailed for months. The Israelites journeyed in the wilderness for 40 years.

Sand, rocks, and snakes. Wilderness. That is what the Israel had seen for 40 years. It was their fault, more likely their father's fault. They did not trust God would give them the land He had promised them. The people looked too big and too strong. And their hearts melted. Yes, even after witnessing The Lord's victory over Pharaoh at the Red Sea. Their doubts were bigger than their faith. They quickly forgot what The Lord had done for them. They paid for it for 40 years.

Now they get a second chance. The 40 years had passed and now they have made it to the border of the Promised Land. And Moses is telling them words about the Land that were preparing to enter, how it is truly the land flowing with milk and honey. Finally, the children of Israel would be able to build their own homes and live in them. Grow their own food. They could now eat fruit. It all sounded quite pleasing. They now will have rest. They would now trust. Or would they?

Yes, they seen it or heard about the Red Sea, but they had experienced The Lord God bringing them and leading them these past forty years. Moses says, Do not forget that God did not abandon you. He took care of you during these forty years. Do not forget the water from the rock, the manna from heaven, clothes and shoes that did not wear out. The lessons of humility and the discipline to form and shape them into a people of God. As you enter the land and settle down remember God is still with you and everything is from God, your food, home, labor, wealth, and life comes from God.

It is as if Moses is saying to the people, "bless the Lord." "Give thanks to God." They needed this reminder before entering the Promised Land, because along the

way they complained, they murmured, they acted like spoiled children, they forgot. So, God disciplined them for their own good when they need it. God never forgot them, even if they did.

What about you? On this Sunday evening before we observe the National day of Thanksgiving, we are fortunate to get this reminder just as Moses reminded the Children of Israel to bless the Lord. Not just for one day on a national holiday, but for our whole lives. Moses continues to remind us that that God continues to be gracious and merciful to us even as when don't realize it.

St. Paul in Philippians 4 reminds us, "But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be known to God. And Peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

The peace of God...will guard our hearts and minds. The Peace is knowing that all things are in His hands. Thanksgiving keeps our hearts and minds focused on the right place. The of Peace of God guards our hearts and minds. Guards from what? From grumbling, form doubting, From forgetfulness. From worry. From fear. From Presumption. From discontent.

We heard tonight also about 10 men who were who in their own wilderness, Lepers. Forced to live outside of the community, away from family. I have a hunch that they grumbled at times in their predicament. They probably got angry with God for allowing this life changing disease in their lives.

Yet, they were not forgotten. Jesus was there for them when they saw Him coming and crying out, "Lord, have mercy." They received mercy from the Lord, probably not as expected. But received it they did, from our steadfast and faithful Lord Jesus Christ. They all went and all ten were cleansed and healed, all received the outer gift of bodily healing, each had the gift to return to the community and loved ones in their family. All ten received this gift.

But one returned to Jesus Himself to give Him thanks, And He was a Samaritan, An outsider. All nine Jewish Lepers received the mercy of our Lord, but it is this one outsider who returned to Jesus to give thanks. He remembered the source of His healing. And Jesus said, "Rise and go

your way, your faith has made you well.”

He received the added gift of the inside healing as well as the outer healing. The cleansing of the heart and the cleansing of the soul.

So here we come tonight, gathered as community of God’s people in Christ Jesus who has made us well and forgiven us of our sins through His death and resurrection. We are gathered here together to remember what Go has done for us and our life together.

Just as many families will travel many miles for Thanksgiving to be with each other because Thanksgiving is best celebrated with others. So, we come together because Thanksgiving is best celebrated as a community, especially a community of Churches. We celebrate it each Sunday in our congregations so that we can remember the source of life together. Form God who keeps giving, Not only for our bodies, also for our souls: For faith, love, mercy, forgiveness, our congregations, and for these, I join Moses in Saying, **Let us Bless the Lord**, We say respond:

Thanks be to God.

The peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen.