

Pastor Shaun Arndt
August 16, 2020
Sermon Text – 1 Timothy 4:4-5
Pentecost 11 – Trust the Lord to Provide

Praise the LORD, O my soul, and never forget all the good he has done. Amen.

Thanksgiving Every Day

Dear Friends in Christ,

Happy Thanksgiving Day! Yes, Happy Thanksgiving! Now, I do know that today is not the fourth Thursday in November—nor am I trying to get ahead of the stores that are already putting out their Halloween merchandise. I'm not talking about the national holiday celebrated with turkey and family.

What I'm talking is **thanksgiving**, as in giving thanks *to the Lord* for all His **good** and gracious gifts each and every day.

To bring God **Thanksgiving Every Day** is a natural conclusion to draw from what the Apostle Paul wrote in our second lesson: **In fact, everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.**

If you are alive to hear this, then there has never been a day of your life when you did not **receive good** gifts from **God**! Each breath that keeps you alive is taken by the lungs God gave when He '**fearfully and wonderfully made**' you (Psalm 139:14). The air you breathe is filtered by plants God **created**. You can breathe that air because God gave us an atmosphere to keep that air from all floating off into space.

Is your heart beating? That's a **good** gift of God's creation: a marvelous muscle that beats 100,000 some times a day.

Go back to that list Luther made in his explanation to the first article we confessed earlier, and see how each one is a gift of God through His **good** creation for us to **receive** every day: *clothing and shoes, food and drink, property and home* (and just think how much those last two words include!), *spouse and children, land, cattle* (or at least the milk and hamburgers that come from them!) *and all I own.*

How blessed we are that most of us, even in a time of pandemic have so many times more than just the most basic needs for body and life!

That some of these blessings may come through our own efforts and earnings doesn't change that they are still gifts from God when we remember these words: *God created me... and gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members and all my abilities.* We could not work, take our paycheck to the bank, buy what we need from the store or plant a garden without all those things!

Clearly we **receive** so much **good** from God. Therefore, let us **receive** it **with thanksgiving**. Our lesson tells us God's **good** gifts are properly **received with thanksgiving** when they are **sanctified by the word of God and prayer**.

Sanctify means to set apart or to make holy. It can describe setting something aside as special—for the work and worship of God. This is also the same Bible word that describes the Holy Spirit's work: that through

God's Word He brings us to faith and so sets us apart from the unbelieving world, and makes us holy by clothing us with Jesus' forgiveness and holiness.

This helps to teach us that just like anything that is a good work in God's sight, **receiving** God's gifts **with thanksgiving** can only be done by believers, since the Bible says that **without faith it is impossible to please God** (Hebrews 11:6). Anyone can "horck" down a sandwich, but only the believer in Christ can do it to take care of their body according to the fifth commandment in **God's Word** out of gratitude for God's love to us in Jesus.

This also means our entire life us is to be one unbroken act of **thanksgiving** and worship to God in all we do, just as another **Word of God** puts it: **So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God** (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Paul specifically mentions **prayer** as part of our **Thanksgiving** to God and using these gifts in worship of God. When we give thanks to the Lord in our prayers for His blessings, we express our faith that He **created** all things and that He will provide for His people just as He has promised!

Yes, **Thanksgiving Every Day** makes perfect sense, since *every day* we **receive** and enjoy the Lord's good gifts. It is so simple that it should go without saying that whole-hearted, whole live-ed **thanksgiving** is the natural response to the Lord's great goodness.

But there is nothing so simple and clear, that the corrupt sinful human nature can't mess it up!

And so yes we **receive** God's **good** gifts over and over, day after day, but all too often our **thanksgiving** is absent. It is never what it could be, never what it should be.

Ever had that experience where you so mindlessly prayed the table prayer that you had to ask, 'wait... did we pray?' With shame I admit that's been my sin just as I can also fall into that sin of making prayer at meal time a habit, rather than a faith-filled remembrance that all we are and all we have comes from His gracious hand.

Of course there are times our thanksgiving isn't just lacking, it's replaced with the very opposite: with complaints, impatience and a lack of contentment. God in His perfect wisdom withholds or removes a gift from us because He knows this will be best for us, but we sinfully gripe and doubt His care and timing.

The author Charles Dickens once commented we do things backward when we celebrate a day of Thanksgiving in November but gripe and complain day after day. He said we should have just one day set aside for complaining and griping and use the other 364 to thank and honor the Lord for showering His blessings upon us.

How often have we proved him right that we've got it backwards by doing things like standing in front of a stocked fridge or pantry that would be the envy of so many and we grumble: "*there's nothing to eat.*"

Plus we can *misuse* God's **good** gifts! Getting drunk is NOT **receiving** God's gift of alcohol **with thanksgiving**, because **drunkenness** is not **sanctified**, but rather condemned by the Word of God. The same is true of overeating or using God's gifts to harm our bodies rather than to take care of them.

In the larger context of these verses, one of the **good** gifts God **created** includes marriage. It is wrong to forbid marriage as false teachers have done like forbidding marriage to the priests in the Roman Church. It is sin to alter God's **creation** of marriage to anything other than one man and one woman or **reject** marriage in

favor of just living together. But don't forget our sin also includes every way we have failed to love and honor our spouse, to thank God for the blessing of marriage and to pray for the marriages of others.

Do you start to see how foully corrupt our old sinful nature is and how great our guilt is before God, when these two simple, little verses in our lesson can show so many ways we defy God's good and perfect ways, not to mention many more ways we could talk about on the basis of these verses that we don't have time to talk about!

First that tells us we are sinners in desperate need of God's mercy.

And second, it helps us see that we have no greater reason to give thanks to God than for the **gift** of His Son, Jesus Christ our Savior!

No gift of God is as **good** as, no gift of God is greater than Jesus. Only Jesus saves us. Only Jesus can make us foul sinners to be **good** and perfect in His sight!

What an awesome, marvelous gift we have in Christ! For as the God-man, born of Mary, He is both the One through whom all things were made, the Almighty Creator God and at the same time became a part of His creation, true man. As the perfect, sinless human being Jesus gave to God that whole-hearted, whole live-ed **Thanksgiving Every Day** that we all lack.

We see Jesus do so every time we hear in the Gospels that He blessed the food, giving thanks and recognition to the Source of all good gifts!

We see it in the way He thanked His Father for every good gift by a life of perfect obedience to every commandment.

We see it in His perfect contentment with God's gifts whether He was at a wedding feast in Cana or when He hungry and without food for forty days in the wilderness.

We see it in the way He went like a lamb to the slaughter of the cross, all *without complaint*, all to pay for our ingratitude and every way we have misused God's good gifts!

In the most amazing, undeserved and entirely one-sided gift exchange ever, Jesus took our sin on Himself and put His perfect life of **thanksgiving every day** on us. When the Holy Spirit **sanctified** you **with the Word of God**, bringing you to faith in Jesus, God made Jesus perfect record of thankfulness to be your record!

Along with Christ who comes to us Bible, Baptism and the Lord's Supper also comes this gift: **The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord** (Romans 6:23).

So even if we had no health, no food, no water, no air, but had only Christ our Savior, then we would still have all we need and have the reason and the power to give **Thanksgiving** to God **Every Day** forever, in the perfect, unending joys of eternal life!

Since by God's gift, we *do have* Jesus and so many other gifts of God, let us make it our conscious and constant goal to **receive** God's **good** gifts with **Thanksgiving Every Day**. Amen.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever. Amen.

