**November 28th 2024 Thanksgiving Day**

**Text: Matthew 6:11** 0749

**Theme: Our Petition to God.**

May our merciful God ever grant that we eat our bread with contentment and thanksgiving, that we may at all times be children of our Father in heaven. Amen. Dear Christians: The history of the Day of Thanksgiving is quite interesting and worth noting in order to appreciate what we here do on this day of celebration. Often many attribute the founding of the holiday to the puritan separatists from the church of England about four hundred years ago. These puritan Christians desired to give thanks for the blessings they had received after they had founded the Plymouth colony about a year earlier. Later, George Washington proclaimed a national day of Thanksgiving in celebration on the success of the fight for independence and the blessings God had bestowed on the new country. Abraham Lincoln is credited with making Thanksgiving an annual national holiday to be celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November. Noting these historical figures gives us a sense of the importance and meaning of this day. These recognized the need to give thanks to God for the blessings He had provided to them in the form of bountiful harvests, protection, and most importantly the blessing of the Word of God in their midst. These things should not be overlooked or left without consideration. These men and the women at the time endured a great amount, and they learned of the providential hand of God in their lives, and the necessity for it. Now to be sure none of those men spoken of were Lutheran, but many, if not all, were Christian. They believed that all good things come from God, and that it was good and right to acknowledge that fact and make it known. They followed what James says: *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (Jms 1:17)*

In our day things are a good deal different then when those men lived especially the Plymouth colonies. Those people lived in a land far away from help, far away from supplies. They were at the mercy of the new land in which they lived, but relying on the mercy of God, they found that He would uphold and sustain them. Likewise, the men at the time of the founding of our country, declared in no uncertain terms in the Declaration of Independence: “And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.” In our day, though, we are not faced with these same types of difficulties. If we need food we have just a short drive to the grocery store. Or if we are unfortunate enough to be unable to afford our groceries, there are friends or family who can help us out, or government programs if all else fails. In short we have it relatively easy today; we have our freedom, we have abundance, and it seemingly appears on our tables with little to no effort. For that reason a national day of Thanksgiving is even more important, for it is, at least, a yearly reminder of the goodness of our God and His mercies unto us. *“It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness.” (Lam. 3:22-23)* Here we see notably that we are only not consumed because of the Lord’s mercies. We deserve no good thing at all from God because of our sin, but God grants us many things in spite of this. Thus for a Christian this day is a day of great significance, for it is the day set aside to give thanks to God for these special mercies, knowing that God’s love provide them all. Let us then do that very thing today, looking at the fourth petition of the Lord’s prayer which is found in the sixth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew, verse eleven.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O Thou gracious and merciful God in heaven, today we gather before Thee to praise Thy name and give thanks to Thee for all the blessings Thou hast provided throughout the year. We confess unto Thee that very often we have failed to give thanks to Thee, and have grumbled and complained about what we perceive to be injustices in our lives. However, we acknowledge today that, because we are sinful creatures, we do not deserve any kindness from Thee. Rather we deserve Thy wrath, and eternal damnation in hell. We thank Thee especially for the gifts of forgiveness and everlasting salvation by Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son and our Savior. Today we recognize Thy hand in all things which Thou hast given unto us: for our food and clothing; for our house and family; for our friends; for peace and safety; but more than anything for Thy Word which heals our souls and preserves us in the true faith which saves us. Grant, O Lord, Thy continued blessings unto us, and turn not away from us in Thy over our sins, but turn toward us in favor for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Guided then by the Spirit of God let us learn of our petition to God, seeing first that we ask:

1. **For bread.** It is note worthy within the Lord’s Prayer, that the fourth petition is the only petition that deals with earthly, temporal matters. In the fourth petition Jesus teaches us to pray for our bread, in other words to pray for our food. Now to be certain God gives food even to the wicked, and so many wonder why it would be necessary to ask when He will give it to us either way? In fact Jesus says: *“He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matt. 5:45)* Yet Jesus teaches to pray for this to remind us that it is God who gives these things to us. They do not come from the grocery store or from our hard work, but only due to God. Our Old Testament lesson today made known that: *“the eyes of all wait upon Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand and satisfies every living thing.” (Ps. 145:15-16)* We notice that God not only gives all things but He gives them to every creature. Thus, as Christians we are to acknowledge that God gives all these things to us, and we should be careful to thank Him for them, for we do not deserve them, even as the wicked. That’s right, Christians should be careful not to complain that God gives the unbelievers their necessary food, for we are no more deserving of it than they are. We too are sinners, and deserve only wrath and punishment.

Now we must also recognize that here we are not only asking for food, but for all things ‘necessary for the support and wants of the body.’ Now for each one we should take special note and give thanks for them. Now we are not here taught to ask for special luxuries and comforts in life, but for those things necessary to the support of life. Thus we are to be reminded that God is the giver of every good and perfect gift. Now secondly we will see that our petition to God is:

1. **For DAILY bread.** Shortly after the Israelites had exited Egypt, and after they had begun wandering in the wilderness, there was no food to be eaten. Moses and the people prayed to God for deliverance and God answered: *“I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, at even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread. And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, it is Manna.” (Ex. 16:12-15)* This was indeed a miracle performed by God to send bread from heaven to those that were hungry. In so doing God had provided bread, when no bread could be found in the wilderness. However, there were some conditions to the gathering of this bread. Each household was only allowed to gather as much as they needed for that day, and to gather nothing extra, and any that did gather extra the Manna would rot and stink by the following day. Why did God provide the Manna in this way? Why not give them bread enough for a year or an decade so that they would never have to worry about where their meal was coming from next? Well the short answer is to build trust in God. You see, since they could only gather what they needed for that day, they had no choice but to rely and trust in God for the bread they needed tomorrow. Thus day by day for many years they learned that God would faithfully provide their DAILY bread.

This sounds quite familiar to us does it not? Have you ever noticed how the things God gives to us never seem to accumulate too rapidly, or too much? More often than not the things we have seem to last just the right length of time, then we often have no choice but to lean upon God for the things we need tomorrow. This is the reason why Jesus teaches us not to ask for abundance, but for today’s bread. Jesus teaches later in the sermon on the mount: *“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (Matt. 6:34)* There is no need for us to think or worry about tomorrow, for there is sufficient things to concern us for today. What Jesus is saying is to let God handle tomorrow, because we know that He has prepared for today, and when tomorrow becomes today, He will be prepared for that as well. Thus have we seen our petition to God for daily bread, let us now see that our petition to God is:

1. **For OUR daily bread.** We want to take special note that Jesus does not tell us to ask for bread only, but to ask for OUR bread only. What Jesus is teaching here is contentment. He teaches us to ask for only those things that God intends for us to have. In other words not asking to be given a great abundance of things, nor to ask that other’s things be granted to us, but for God to give us just exactly what it is that He desires that we have. Maybe it is more than someone else, or it is less, but either way, it should not matter, because we get what God intends for us. There is no harder life, than the life lived to compete with other people, because it can and will never be accomplished. No matter how much you have gathered, there is always someone who has gathered more. Jesus attempts to guide our focus not to compare ourselves with others, nor to accumulate much wealth, but to be happy, truly content with what things God has given to us. Being content is to be thankful for the things God HAS given, and not unhappy with the things He has not given. As Christians our primary focus should be on those things. Now more than anything, beyond what things we need for our bodies is the bread needed for our souls, that is, the Bread of heaven as spoken of by Jesus in our Gospel lesson earlier. This bread feeds our souls, and whether we are wealthy beyond comprehension or more destitute than any other person on earth, if we have the Word of God than we have the greatest gift of God that can be asked for. With this let us be content, to eat our Daily bread with peace in our heart through sin forgiven and eternal salvation promised. In so doing we find that today is a great day indeed.

It is fitting then that before we go home and eat our feasts for the day, enjoy each other’s company, and rest from the daily stresses of life, that we gather here to acknowledge and thank our God for each and every one of them. Let us then be grateful children, not spoiled brats who simply want more and more. Thank you, O Lord, for all your blessings, may each of us be thankful today and every day. Amen.