

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 18
Saturday, October 8, 2022, at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, October 9, 2022, at 9:00 a.m.

“Give Thanks”

Luke 17:11-19

The pinnacle, the focal point of our worship service, of the Divine Service is the sharing and receiving of the body and blood of the Son of God under the form of bread and wine in the mystery of the sacrament. This meal is called many names within the church. The most common are: The Lord’s Supper, Holy Communion, the Sacrament of the Altar; the name which comes from the actual original Greek accounting of this meal is “the Eucharist.”

“Eucharistew” means “giving thanks.” We might think of that as a basic, generic term – calling it a meal of thanksgiving. It doesn’t have the attachment to that which is holy, sacred, or connected to God as the other names do. However, when you understand the use of the word “Eucharistew” in the New Testament, it is easy to see why the early Christians called this meal the Eucharist – and not just because of the use of Eucharistew in the Words of Institution, “He gave thanks, broke the loaves, and gave it to the disciples.”

The account of the 10 Lepers from Luke's Gospel emphasizes this word and its place within Scripture and the church. In the entire New Testament, Eucharistew – "giving thanks" is only used within the context of people giving thanks to God. In addition to the Words of Institution, this thanksgiving is seen especially throughout Paul's writings; we see the saints in John's Revelation giving thanks to God and worshiping Him for what He has done.

The one time in the entire NT that thanksgiving is not directed to God in heaven is the thanksgiving offered by this Samaritan leper. He directs his thanksgiving to God on earth. He worships Jesus. He falls on his face at Jesus' feet and "Eucharistew's" Him. This is something which is only done to God. Of course, Jesus is God – and that is part of the point.

In our Sunday morning Bible class, we have been taking an in-depth look at the nature and attributes of God – how He is all-powerful, all-knowing, present everywhere, unchangeable, and eternal. However, the essence of who God is and our faith in Him is not focused on identifiable attributes. Knowing who God is would be of no use or value to us if it were not for what He has done.

Everything about God which matters to our existence is directly correlated to our justification by grace through faith. You are justified, declared to be not guilty by God the Judge Himself. This is not because of some bargain we make with God. We are heading toward our Reformation celebration at the end of the

month. Prior to his rediscovery of the Gospel, Luther was a member of the Observant Augustinian Order who had a motto. I don't know the Latin, but their motto was essentially: "Do the best you can." (I'm sure it sounds better in the Latin).

There is a reason that Luther found no comfort in his life in the monastery. What is Christianity? The Christian faith is not having belief in a higher Being who gives us a set of rules and tells us to "do the best you can" and God will be the judge on how well you did and send you to heaven or hell. There is no comfort if that is our reality. There would be no reason to give thanks – to Eucharistew God.

Because everything about God which matters to our existence is directly correlated to our justification by grace through faith, then our focus is not on who God is or who Jesus is (this is not to say that who God is is unimportant), but our focus is on what He has done. As the hymnwriter says, "Give thanks with a grateful heart for what He has done for us."

God the Father sent Jesus His Son, whom He had promised to Adam and Abraham and throughout the proclamations of Moses and the prophets; God had promised the "Seed of the woman" who would crush the head of Satan. God becomes incarnate – He takes on flesh. John tells us, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." However, the focus of the Incarnation is not simply the God/man reality. The focus of God taking on flesh is the saving work that Jesus,

the Second Adam, has done for us by being the final Lamb of sacrifice upon the altar of the cross, defeating sin, death, and Satan in one, final blow.

All of this, all that Christ has done for us, all of His work can only be grasped by faith. As Scripture says, His will and His mind is unsearchable – beyond comprehension; inscrutable (that is a great word).

All that we have is only given to us by grace. It is a gift. It is all Christ's work. It is all received by faith. All that we can do is turn to Him and give thanks. The Samaritan leper returns to Jesus, bows down in worship and gives thanks to Jesus.

When Jesus says, "your faith has made you well," don't read that as if the Samaritan leper played a role in his own healing. It was a gift. It was all Christ's work. It was a gift receive in faith which God created in him. His worship of Jesus is a confession of his faith.

The same is true of each of us. Having faith is not a work that you or I do. It is a gift you have received by grace – brought to you through the Word of God; the proclaimed Word, the Word joined with water, the Word made flesh who still dwells among us as He comes to us in His body and blood.

We come together once again and commune with our Lord at His gracious invitation. In faith, we return to Jesus, worship Him for what He has done, and give thanks. Amen.