

# Thanksgiving Eve

Philippians 4:6-20

Each year as we celebrate the National Day of Thanksgiving, we hear of how God humbled the Israelites, tested them for 40 years in the wilderness to see if they would be faithful and keep His covenant. We are told that He led them and took care of them. He fed them with manna and did not let their clothes wear out. Even when God is testing us and causing us to endure strange and even difficult times, He is still leading us and taking care of our needs.

We hear Paul's words from Philippians: "Do not be anxious about anything . . . whatever the situation, be content." And like the Samaritan in our Gospel reading, return thanks to God. We read the words of the Fourth Petition: "Give us this day our daily bread" and the meaning from Luther's Catechism— words which we have already spoken tonight.

We look through the list of what Luther says is included in "daily bread." What God provides us is so much more than just the minimum of a hunk of bread that will keep our bodies functioning for another day.

Tomorrow as we gather around the table and feast together with family and loved ones, we see much more than just daily bread we have received from the hand of God. In a society of abundance, on a holiday in which we partake of abundance, it is challenging to stay focused on what it means to be content — whether you have plenty or you are going hungry, whether you have an abundance or have real and daily needs. To be content with what you have. To be satisfied with what God has given you — your clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home (and those are different when you think about it. A home is more than just a roof over your head). If you have a devout husband or wife, if you have a husband

or wife who is a devout child of God, then you have more than all the riches of the world.

I was reading an article on inflation last week. It was actually pertaining to how bad inflation is in Turkey. I know, I'm an economics nerd. The article was entitled: "We don't deserve this." As I was thinking about what I wanted to say this Thanksgiving, I thought about that phrase. We don't deserve what? When we truly ponder the Fourth Petition, we don't "deserve" even a hunk of bread each day.

As Luther says, God "gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people." Scripture says that while we were still "evil" (unrighteous), God chose to love us and He gave us much greater food than a hunk of bread to sustain us for one day. He gave us the Bread of Life. He gave us His Son. He still gives us His Son.

Our Father in heaven has showered down gift upon gift to His children. You don't deserve it. I don't deserve it, but He has chosen to love us anyway. It is like the Thanksgiving meal and you are a child at the kiddie table. No child seated at the kiddie table deserves to eat such a fine meal. You didn't purchase the food. You didn't prepare it. You live in a home that you did not pay for. You wear clothes that you did not pay for. Such is the life of a child.

As a child of God, everything worth talking about from this pulpit was purchased with the blood of Christ or provided to you by the grace of your heavenly Father. You did not earn it. You do not deserve it. It is given to you anyway. Such is the life of a child of God.

Those who sit at the kiddie table rarely have a true appreciation for the gifts they have been given. More than likely, those sitting at the kiddie table not only believe they deserve all that is on their plate, but they also deserve to be sitting at the big table. Such is the life of a child.

Be content with what God has given you, and give thanks for a gracious Father who does not give us what we deserve. Amen.