

Thanksgiving Day
Year of the Lord 2019

**“Holy Spirit, Light Divine, shine upon this heart of mine;
Chase the shades of night away; turn the darkness into day!”
“Let me see my Savior’s face; let me all HIS beauties trace!
Show those glorious truths to me which are only known to
Thee!”**

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. *What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

In the Name of Jesus:

“In ME?!” *What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me---in PAUL?!*

Go ahead and thank me after the Sacrament. Your first course to feast on, on Thanksgiving Day: a serving of Saint Paul’s letter to the Philippians!

THANKS BE TO GOD!

The apostle Paul was ALWAYS pointing to the message of the cross, Christ crucified, risen, ascended, coming soon! And he was quick with words such as, ‘If a man boasts, let him boast IN THE LORD!’

In a letter to the saints at Philippi—who, he records, have sent some sort of delegation and gift to Paul in prison— Oh! He extols CHRIST!

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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Christ's humiliation—as a Man! Christ's exaltation—as a Man!

So, my dear ones: why, for our Thanksgiving Day reading, does the apostle POINT...TO...HIMSELF?! 'Imitate ME!' He does it more than once!

For the same reason he pointed to the Philippians THEMSELVES—and said, 'Have the mind of Christ in you!'

Ah! Because GOD is THAT MUCH given to his saints IN CHRIST!

He called out to those dear saints of our church to walk worthily in this world, as citizens of HEAVEN ABOVE, not just a proud Roman colony. But his precise words were, '²⁷ Only let your manner of life be *worthy of the gospel of Christ*, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, *with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel*,²⁷—so that when I COME, I can see it....!'

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Php 2:5–12). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Php 1:27). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

The Gospel; the Good News; the message the makes spring to life gratitude and praise of God in Christ!

I smile to remember the song sister Stacie taught the youth choir years ago: ‘Are you hum-ble-ly grateful, or grum-ble-ly hateful? What’s your attitude? Do you grumble or groan? Or do you make know you’re grateful for what God’s done for you?!’

God bless our Native Land! God bless America!

Yet, she has problems. IGNORE the talking heads from your TVs for a few minutes. Let’s be serious.

From the perspective of the Small Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther; from heaven’s view; from the Spirit’s Word: what are our land’s problems? Always the same!

Plenty is one problem. Want is the other.

God gives more than even WE greedy Guses desire—so much, that the view of God is covered, blocked. Too much plenty even to pause and thank the Giver of bounty?

Men also lose their faith when deprivation hits—loss that seems to last forever. If God does not give me even daily bread, or a little jam for my toast now and then, what’s up with God?

How to sum up the apostle’s letter?

Be good; keep the commandments.

LOVE the mercy shown to those who are human and normal and do violence to the two commands: God is all; be good God yourself to men!

And through the whole thing—with the confidence of a baptized child of God: PRAY—humble-ly GRATEFUL, for what He HAS GIVEN—The Whole Christ, pardon, heaven, and a certain, open ear of a dear Father above!

And Pray for pardon for the grumbling and the hatefulness—from which NONE of us is able to escape being splashed with, in our dear, old Republic.

Here is the way the apostle lived; and then called out for imitation. We can hardly do better than this:

²Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ³

OR....

¹⁷Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Php 3:2–11). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

4 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

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AND, of course:

¹⁰ I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ Through the One Who gives me strength, I am well-resourced for plenty, for want, and everything in between.

The apostle knew the line of the old prophets very well: DO the right thing; DO justice; but BE IN LOVE with MERCY; and you will walk humble-ly, gratefully, with the apostle, with the saints of old, with Christ.

And the peace of God that passes all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Php 3:17–4:2). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.