

Sermon for November 24, 2016 - Thanksgiving

Deuteronomy 8:10-18 (EHV)

**Theme: Don't Forget the LORD. . .**

- 1) *He blesses us with prosperity.*
- 2) *He delivers us through every trial.*
- 3) *He keeps his promises.*

*<sup>10</sup>Then you will eat, and you will be filled, and you will praise the LORD your God for the good land that he has given you. <sup>11</sup>Be very careful so that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and ordinances and his statutes that I am commanding you today. <sup>12</sup>When you eat and are satisfied, and you build nice houses and move into them, <sup>13</sup>and your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold increase, and everything that you have prospers, <sup>14</sup>watch out so that your heart does not become arrogant and forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, where you were slaves. <sup>15</sup>Do not forget the LORD, who led you in the great and terrifying wilderness, where there were venomous snakes and scorpions, where the thirsty ground had no water, but the LORD made water come out of a flint rock for you. <sup>16</sup>Do not forget the LORD, who in the wilderness fed you manna, which your fathers had not known before, to humble you and to test you so that it would be good for you later on. <sup>17</sup>You might say in your heart, "My ability and the power of my hand have earned this wealth for me." <sup>18</sup>But then you are to remember that the LORD your God is the one who gives you the ability to produce wealth, to confirm his covenant that he promised to your fathers with an oath, as he does to this day.*

Today is a special day. Our culture encourages us to take a step back from all our labor in order to give thanks for all that we have. And we certainly have a lot to be thankful for, don't we? Food, shelter, clothing, running water, electricity, cars, computers, and cell phones. . . Compared with our forefathers, we certainly have a lot of physical blessings.

But whom should we thank for them? The obvious answer is God, right? Well, that answer may be obvious to us, but it isn't obvious to all! Our society likes to think that it has itself to thank for all that it enjoys? I mean, didn't we learn at school that the USA is a country in which any person can attain his dreams through hard work and determination? As we consider all our earthly blessings, shouldn't we, then, at least give ourselves a little pat on the back and say: "You earned this, buddy. You did good"?

No we shouldn't. And why not? Because we would then be stealing the honor that belongs to God alone.

With our sermon text as our guide, let us learn to give God the glory that he is due, under the theme: **Don't Forget the LORD. . .** 1) *He blesses us with prosperity.* 2) *He delivers us through every trial.* 3) *He keeps his promises*

Part One: He blesses us with prosperity.

Our sermon text is part of a longer sermon Moses gave the Israelites as they were about to enter the promised land of Canaan – a land flowing with milk and honey. Their 40 years of homelessness, severe trial and tribulation were about to come to an end. Now they would enjoy the prosperity God promised: in their own houses, on their own land, with their own flocks and herds!

And why would the LORD give the Israelites all these blessings? So that he might be glorified as a God who keeps his promises and delivers his people, as the first verse of our text indicates:

*<sup>10</sup>Then you will eat, and you will be filled, and you will praise the LORD your God for the good land that he has given you.*

Brothers and sisters in Christ: why has God given **you** all **your** wealth and prosperity? The first verse of our text tells us: it's so that you can praise the LORD, **your God**. Yes, the LORD is **your God**, who loved you so much that he sent His one and only Son to suffer and die for your sins. He loves you so much that he called you to repentance and faith by means of His Gospel – making you his child through Holy Baptism. He has promised to watch over every aspect of your life, and the prosperity you enjoy is proof of this fact.

But there is also a danger in the prosperity he provides. Moses warns:

*<sup>11</sup>Be very careful so that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and ordinances and his statutes that I am commanding you today. <sup>12</sup>When you eat and are satisfied, and you build nice houses and move into them, <sup>13</sup>and your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold increase, and everything that you have prospers, <sup>14</sup>watch out so that your heart does not become arrogant and forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, where you were slaves.*

Israel's history often played this sad truth out: whenever the LORD allowed his people to prosper, they soon began to forget him. It's interesting to note that many Old Testament prophets did not minister during times of national want, but during times of national prosperity - calling God's people to repent of their arrogance, selfishness and idolatry.

Is it any different today? The LORD has allowed many western nations, in which Christianity once thrived, to become very prosperous. But look at what has happened: Christianity is declining in those nations. People have become arrogant – thinking that they have no need to follow the

Bible. Why not? Because all is well. Why would they need a Savior when life is so good? They say: “Where is this “god” who supposedly provides for all our needs. We don’t see him. Our human intelligence, work ethic and entrepreneurship have accomplished all we have.”

We Christians might think we would never be so crass to say things like that, and yet aren’t we also tempted to view all the stuff we own as stuff we deserve – stuff we worked hard to get? Aren’t we also tempted to mindlessly cling to all our physical blessings – forgetting the LORD and the eternal life he has prepared for us in Christ?

Yes, there is great danger in great wealth. So, then, how should we view our prosperity? Should we be afraid of it – considering it more of a curse than a blessing? Should we give all our wealth away in order to live a more austere life? No – that’s not what the LORD wants us to do. The LORD gave us our wealth as a blessing – to be used to the glory of his name. Therefore He wants us to enjoy the prosperity he has given us with thanksgiving. He wants us to grow in love and faith towards him - considering how he keeps his promise to work in all things for our eternal good.

Part Two: He delivers us through every trial.

Moses continues:

*<sup>15</sup>Do not forget the LORD, who led you in the great and terrifying wilderness, where there were venomous snakes and scorpions, where the thirsty ground had no water, but the LORD made water come out of a flint rock for you. <sup>16</sup>Do not forget the LORD, who in the wilderness fed you manna, which your fathers had not known before, to humble you and to test you so that it would be good for you later on.*

Life for the Israelites wasn’t always easy. The LORD allowed them to face a lot of severe trials during their 40-year desert journey: deadly animals, powerful enemies, hunger and thirst. And yet look: the LORD miraculously delivered them through it all. He gave them the food, drink and protection they needed. He kept his promise to watch over them in every evil in order to safely deliver them to the land he wanted them to have.

The LORD wanted the Israelites to remember how he kept his promises in times of severe trial. Every bad thing they experienced served their deliverance and good. He wanted them to grow in faith – realizing that, without his gracious love and deliverance, they would most certainly be lost.

What was true for the Israelites is also true for us. The LORD has been with us throughout our lives – keeping his promises. Has there ever been a time you lacked food or drink as you held on to him in faith? Has there ever been a time he failed to provide for your bodily needs? The fact that you are here today shows the answer.

Now, the LORD certainly may have allowed severe trials in your life, but you can know for certain that whatever he allowed, he allowed for your good; that it would, somehow and in some way, benefit your faith by leading you to cling all the more closely to Christ.

So, as you give thanks today for all the blessings you have received from the LORD, don't forget to consider his hand in all the trials you faced – how he kept his promise to deliver you through them all. You can be sure that he will continue to watch over you in every trial you may face in the future. He will use them to strengthen you and as he keeps his promise to lead you to your promised land of heaven. How can you be sure of this? Because God always keeps his promises.

### Part Three: He keeps his promises

Moses continues:

*<sup>17</sup>You might say in your heart, “My ability and the power of my hand have earned this wealth for me.” <sup>18</sup>But then you are to remember that the LORD your God is the one who gives you the ability to produce wealth, to confirm his covenant that he promised to your fathers with an oath, as he does to this day.*

Our LORD is gracious. The only reason anyone is successful is because He allows it. The only reason our age has seemed to advance more quickly than other ages of history in the areas of science, medicine and technology is because the LORD has given our society the abilities and wisdom to do so. He knows that our world needs these advancements to feed, clothe and sustain the billions of people that presently live on this earth. Though people do the work, none of their striving and labor would achieve anything without the LORD keeping his promise to provide for all people during their time of grace on this earth.

And what the LORD does for the world in general, he also does more specifically for us. Everything you have and are is a result of God's love for you in Christ. He has poured out all His blessings upon you in keeping with His promises. This is why you never have to fear tough times because you can be confident that he will be with you – giving you the abilities and tools you need to glorify his name on this earth until he brings all of us to the eternal paradise he promised to give us in Christ.

You see our present, prosperous life, with all its glitz and glitter, is not the Promised Land to which we are journeying. It is merely an oasis on the way. The real Promised Land is yet to come, where we will enjoy God's unending presence and glory for all eternity. We can be certain that God will keep his promise to bring us there because he has already given up his one and only Son to pay for all our sins in full. If he did that for us, *how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?* (Romans 8:32 NIV84)

Brothers and sisters in Christ, as you spend time today looking over all your blessings, don't forget the LORD. Don't let your prosperity blind you from seeing your need for him. He loves you. He wants you to be faithful to him – not only thanking him today, but every day as you remember his faithfulness to you. Don't forget the LORD. He has blessed you with your prosperity. He has delivered you through every trial. He always keeps his promises. As you hold on to him in faith, will deliver you safely to heaven.

Therefore, as you eat your Thanksgiving dinner today, enjoying your family, friends and prosperity, don't forget the LORD. Amen.