

Theme: **“For the Lord Your God”**

Text: Deuteronomy 8:1-10

Date: November 21, 2018

Occasion: Thanksgiving Eve Service 2018

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

Grace and peace to you as you give thanks to God for all your blessings, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

What are you thankful for this year as we come to another Thanksgiving? The Hymn that we just sang helps us to give thanks as we sing *“For the fruits of His creation, Thanks be to God” “For His gifts to every nation, Thanks be to God” “For the plowing, sowing, reaping, growing and future needs in earth’s safekeeping, Thanks be to God.”* (Hymn #894 vs. 1) Now I’m not so sure that the pilgrims who had landed in America in 1620 at Plymouth Rock and made it through that first year in America with the help of their friends, the Wampanoag Indians, were thinking about other nations and the future needs of the earth. Oh, they were quite thankful on that first Thanksgiving for the friendship of the Wampanoag Indians, who had taught them many things about the land that they were now living in. They were thankful that they could plow, sow, reap and grow food to survive on and yet there was more to their thanksgiving than the material things of this world. The Puritan Pilgrims came to this land for the freedom to worship God according to His Word and now after a hard year of learning how to live in this land they were thankful for God’s guidance that had brought them to America, to a land of promise.

The Israelites were in a similar situation just outside the Promised Land when Moses gathered them all together to remind them of what they should be thankful for, as they got ready to go over to take the Land that God had promised to their forefathers. Moses said to them, **“The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers. ² And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. ³ And He humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”** (Deu. 8:1-3)

Tonight, as we prepare for this year's Thanksgiving, we should be thankful for the Ten Commandment that God has given to us. The Ten Commandment show us how to live in the land that God has given to us as Jesus says to us, "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.**" (Mt. 22:37) This is the first part of fulfilling the Ten Commandments. For the Lord our God has loved us and has brought His Word and Sacraments into our lives to give us the ability to love Him. That's what the third verse of the hymn that we just sang talks about as it says, "*For the harvest of the Spirit, Thanks be to God.*" "*For the good we all inherit, Thanks be to God.*" "*For the wonders that astound us, for the truths that still confound us, most of all, that LOVE has found us, Thanks be to God.*" (Hymn #894 vs. 3)

The Lord our God uses the Holy Spirit through His Word and Sacraments to bring us to faith in the love of God for us. It is that faith that many of us have inherited as our parents brought us to be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, bring us up in the knowledge of God's Commandment so that we could learn how much God loves us and how much that love is involved in our lives each and every day. God's love is the wonder that astound us each day as we look at the Ten Commandments and see our sins and then come to understand God forgiveness, grace and mercy working in our lives daily, Thanks be to God. The Lord our God shows us these truths even though God's commandments show us our sins and through the truth of God's forgiveness, grace and mercy we give thanks to God by asking Him to enable us to strive to love Him with all our hearts and with all our soul and with all our mind as the Ten Commandment direct us to do.

The second part of fulfilling God's Ten Commandments is by loving our neighbors as ourselves, which is letting God's love in us be shared with our neighbor. So, how do we know that God's love is with us every day and be able to give Him thanks for that blessing? Well in our journey through the wilderness of this world we too will be disciplined as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord our God disciplines us because of His love for us. That enables us to know and strive to keep the commandments of the Lord our God and learn how to walk in His love, peace and joy, growing in our fear of Him, that is our love, reverence and respect for Him, Thanks be to God. That love, reverence and respect for God can be shared with our family, friends and neighbors as the Holy Spirit goes to work in our lives through His Word and Sacraments.

Of all the gifts for which we are thankful for on this Thanksgiving, the greatest by far should be God's love through Christ found in us. Moses talked to the people of Israel about all the love that God had given to them in the past and how God's love will be with them in the future for each commandment is given to us to help us see God's love for us and how to share God's love with others as we live in God's love daily.

There's an old story about a traveler traveling through the Midwest looking for unique barns. One day he came upon a barn in which the devil had stored seeds he planned to sow into the hearts of all people. There were containers filled with seeds marked "Hatred," "Fear," "Doubt," "Despair," "Unforgiveness," "Pride," "Greed," and many more. As the traveler looked around the barn at all the containers of seeds the devil appeared and struck up a conversation with the traveler, telling him how easily these seeds sprout when he sows them into the hearts of the men and women of this world. The traveler asked, "Are there any hearts in which these seeds will not sprout?" A melancholy look appeared on the devil's face as he responded; "These seeds will not sprout in the hearts of those who are thankful and joyful for the love of God in their life." What is sprouting in your heart?

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry.³ And the tempter came and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."⁴ But He answered, "It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Mt. 4:1-4) The Lord our God gave these words to Moses to tell the people of Israel so that they would learn that God's love is not understood in this world without God's Word being a major part of what we are thankful for each and every day of our life.

Jesus say to us that the second part of fulfilling God's Ten Commandments comes in our lives, as we "**love your neighbor as yourself.**" (Mt. 22:39) God's love in our lives gives us all that is needed in abundance each and every day, but in the sharing God's love with our neighbor we are planting the seed of faith in them and that brings them and us to be truly thankful for all that God has given to us from the land that we live in now, to the Promised Land, our Heavenly Home, that we are looking forward to living in the future.

The pilgrims of Plymouth Rock came to this land looking for the freedom of worshipping God in His Word. That was the reason that brought many of our forefathers to

this land also. Through the years many different groups of people left Europe and other countries because of the government's involvement in their faith in God and His Word. They have come to the United States of America with the hope of being able to hold their lives true to God's Word and share His Love with others. They were all looking for a place where they could sow the seeds of God's love in abundance because they were thankful for the abundance of love God has given to them by His Only Son, Jesus Christ, for He is coming into this world out of love for us and fulfilling all the Ten Commandments for us. Because of Jesus great love for us, He took all our sins upon Himself and went to the Cross of Calvary to make the full and final payment for all our sins by His death and then rose again on the third day to give us the assurance that God's love for us has opened the gates of heaven, the Promised land, that will enable us to **"eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land He has given you."** (Deu. 8:10) *"Now thank we all our God with hearts and hand and voices, who wondrous things has done, in whom His world rejoices; Who form our mother's arms has blest us on our way with countless gifts of love and still is our today".* (Hymn #895 vs 1)

We give thanks to the Lord our God tonight and every day of our life for the Lord our God's love for us. God's love is found in His Word and Sacraments and through the Holy Spirit working in our lives we respond in the way our hymn declared, *"In the just reward of labor, God's will is done. In the help we give our neighbor, God's will is done, in our world-wide task of caring for the hungry and despairing, In the harvest we are sharing, God's will be done."* (Hymn #894 vs. 2) As we give thanks to God tonight, tomorrow and in the future for the all that the Lord our God has given to us, out of his love for us, may our thankfulness be seen as we share His love with others so that the seed of God's love may be sown and watered by His Word and Sacraments in them. Amen.