

Let Us Give Thanks to the Giver

Sermon October 9, 2022 - Thanksgiving

Scripture Readings: John 6:1-13 and Philippians 4:4–9

Golden Verse: *"Because everything is from you, and what we took from your hand, we have now given to you."* 1 Chronicles 29:14b

Today on Thanksgiving Sunday, let us give thanks to our dear Heavenly father, for everything He gave us, what He gives us day by day, and let us see how we can give thanks for all His gifts.

Let us give thanks first for the daily bread, the daily food we eat, knowing that because of war and the dry summer, so many people around the world won't have their daily bread.

During history, God always revealed Himself in His actions and teachings. He reveals His will in emotional actions. God revealed His heart to us in Jesus. Jesus is the window through which we can look into the heart of God. We have a God who takes care of all our needs, even of our rest. The Bible tells us that when we sleep, He is watching over us.

Once, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, in Jesus' hands, the five small bun-like loaves and two fish were multiplied due to His majestic power. Everyone who was around Him was fed and nobody remained hungry. God wants everyone to have their daily bread. In this way, Jesus, sharing the bread, reflects the paternal love of God who takes care of us, providing the daily food we need.

It would be so good to see behind all our fulfilled needs God's paternal love, who takes care of you and me. I think that there, on the shores of Lake Gennesaret, the crowd had a better perception of food than we do today. They saw better that everything they ate was from the hands of Jesus.

Those people there really experienced the need of bread, the importance of food. I think they were more appreciative after they were satisfied. When they held that bread in their hands, it must have been a truly vivid experience for them, and we read: *"Everything that we have taken from Your hand is from You."* (1 Chronicles 29:14b) They received free gifts, and that is why they wanted to proclaim Jesus as king.

I think that this story was written so that we, today's people, can also see behind our daily bread the caring, loving hand that gives it to us. It is not so obvious that we can have bread, food, and all what we need,

The food that you ate this morning, or that you will eat for lunch, is just as miraculous today as the bread that those people ate there on the shore of the lake.

There is Someone, a dear, mighty Someone, who created the grain of wheat in such a way that it could become bread for us. He who created our surrounding nature in such a way that the seeds of grain, that are sown, should become thirty-eight, sixty, hundreds: they multiply like those five small rolls of bread and those two small fishes in the hands of Jesus - this is just such a miracle. There is Someone who dispenses the hot day and the cool night, the sunshine and the rain, so that the crops will ripen. Without His blessing, all human efforts would be in vain! Yes, the bread you take in your hands every day is a miracle, just like the one in the story. This is the miracle of the caring love of our God. It is not as obvious and natural that it can be on our table as it seems. We can only say: "Everything is from You"; we, too, have taken everything from Your hand.

God not only cares about our souls, but also about our stomachs because man is body and soul, a spiritual reality as well as a material one. And God is the Lord and Saviour of both. We have both material and spiritual needs. Paul says in the letter to the Romans: "*He who did not favour His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not give us all things together with Him?*" (Romans 8:32) Everything! This means the daily bread, too.

Grace! Grace is even deeper than love. Grace is always one-sided. God's grace doesn't ask for anything. He gives everything.

(There is nothing greater than living by the grace of God. We can experience His grace constantly here on earth and we will experience it in heaven along with all our spiritual and physical needs.

Everything we have is a miracle of God's grace. We, who believe in God, know that there is Someone who takes care of us with great love, Someone to whom we can say: "Everything is from you!" We took everything from you! And Lord, You are the One to Whom we can finally say that "what we took from your hand, we have now given to you."

What can we give to God, since we ourselves received everything from Him? What and how can we give to God, who lacks nothing, because everything is His?

I remember when I was a little kid, I asked my mother for money so I could buy her something for her birthday.

My mother, seeing the flower I bought for her, said: “This is the most beautiful gift I could have received!” Before God, we will always remain such little children. Believe me, our heavenly Father feels the same way: that the most beautiful, the dearest gift is when He receives something beautiful, something good from His children, when He receives something back out of gratitude from what He has given to us.

One of the kindest thing we can give is gratitude, a word of thanks. And yet, how rarely does God receive this from us?

God receives the praise and exaltation in heaven; He is also glorified on earth by the entire created universe. But He would most like to hear this praise from the mouths of His human children, who know that they live from His hand and can therefore say with all their hearts: “Thank you, Father!” From now on, we could say this table blessing with more spirit and a more grateful heart: “He who gave food and drink, may His name be blessed!”

If you can accept bread from His hand as His gift, believe me, it will nourish you better, it will taste better, because you will taste that the daily food comes from your Loving Father’s heart. In every gift, God gives you a little bit of His heart. The gift includes the giver’s heart and love.

So, what can we give back from what we have received from His hand? The gratitude of our hearts! Not just today, or now, but always.

A grateful life is a truly happy life. A person with a grateful heart can use everything he has received from the hand of God. We can give for the benefit of our fellow Christians, giving for God’s glory. A grateful person knows that he/she owes to give, because he also received everything. A grateful person can give love, kindness, help, bread to others, because he received it. And we will receive more if we give more. So, actually, it is not the least, but the most, that we can give to God with gratitude. For this, let’s say with a thankful and giving heart:

“Everything is from You, and what we have received from Your hand, we have now given to You, Lord.” (1 Chronicles 29:14b) Amen.