

*Messiah Lutheran Church  
Thanksgiving Midweek Message  
Wednesday, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020*



Welcoming Litany

Today we offer our thanksgiving and gratitude  
to the Giver of all good and perfect gifts,

**The Lord be praised.**

For the tables we share  
and the bread we partake of within our communities, within our families,  
and within our homes,

**The Lord be praised.**

For the hands of friendship that have been extended to us  
and the grace we have received,

**The Lord be praised.**

For Your continual provision in our lives,

**The Lord be praised.**

For the embrace of love,

**The Lord be praised.**

For Your mercies that are new at dawn and sustain us through the day,  
echoing through the night,

**The Lord be praised.**

For the gift of Your Son and His life poured out.

**The Lord be praised.**

For the life that beats within us now.

**The Lord be praised.**

In all things, we give You thanks and join with creation's song,

**Great is the Lord and most worthy to be praised!**

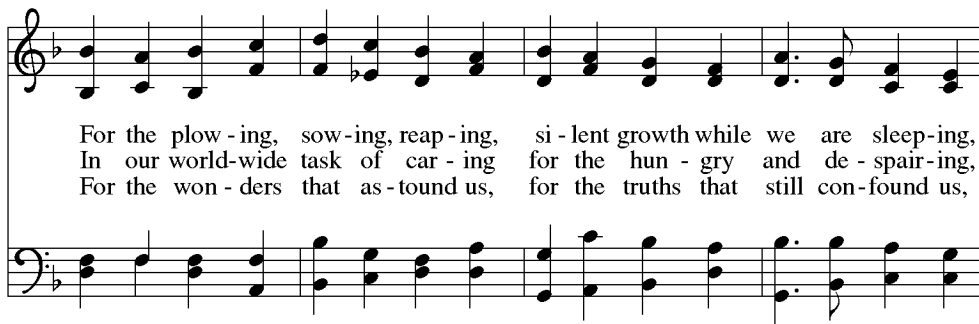
## For the Fruit of All Creation



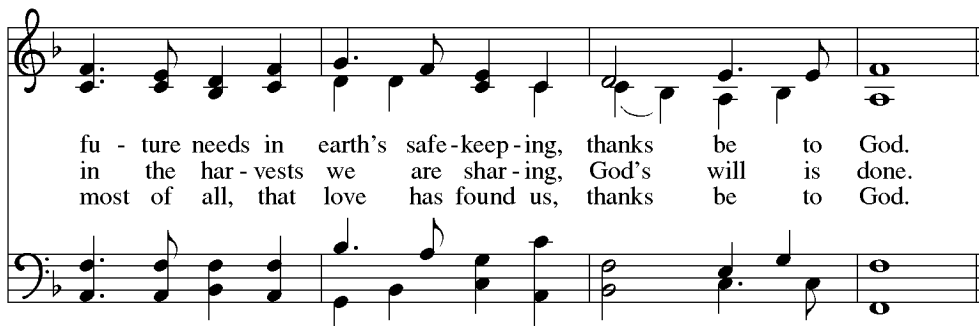
1 For the fruit of all cre - a - tion, thanks be to God.  
 2 In the just re - ward of la - bor, God's will is done.  
 3 For the har - vests of the Spir - it, thanks be to God.



For these gifts to ev - 'ry na - tion, thanks be to God.  
 In the help we give our neigh - bor, God's will is done.  
 For the good we all in - her - it, thanks be to God.



For the plow - ing, sow - ing, reap - ing, si - lent growth while we are sleep - ing,  
 In our world - wide task of car - ing for the hun - gry and de - spair - ing,  
 For the won - ders that as - tound us, for the truths that still con - found us,



fu - ture needs in earth's safe - keep - ing, thanks be to God.  
 in the har - vests we are shar - ing, God's will is done.  
 most of all, that love has found us, thanks be to God.

Text: Fred Pratt Green, 1903–2000  
 Music: AR HYD Y NOS, Welsh traditional; arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872–1958  
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## Devotion

*From Martin Luther's Small Catechism – The Lord's Prayer*

### **The Fourth Petition**

Give us today our daily bread.

*What is this? or What does this mean?*

In fact, God gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all evil people, but we ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving.

*What then does "daily bread" mean?*

Everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

## Meditation

It is good to give thanks. It is our duty and delight to give thanks. It's good manners, what you're taught to do. "Please and thank you." It's also easy *not* to give thanks, at times. To take things for granted. To covet something more. Circumstances being what they are this year, my thankfulness has a different tone, a different tint. I'm very thankful for health, for a home, for some stability. For my family. For my congregation. For safety. And yet...I find myself focused on the things we *can't* do right now, the things we shouldn't be doing, the things that are still *off* the table, the things that feel like we've had taken away, the things that were just a given in years past that are now unavailable or bent beyond recognition.

As much as I wish that things were "back to normal" by this point, more than eight months into this pandemic, this holiday of Thanksgiving is an opportunity to step back. No matter the year, Thanksgiving is a chance to take stock and count our blessings; but *this* year it has a different character. This year I'm especially thankful for this day to give thanks, when I'd like to say "no thank you" to so much in life.

In church we talk a lot about how Jesus came to bring eternal life and salvation, life after death. But Jesus also came to change life *before* death. Or, as most people refer to it: just life. In John 10 Jesus says, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

Even in the midst of these current quarantines – that's right, quarantines, plural: quarantined from the coronavirus, quarantined by division, quarantined by fear and hate, from fear and hate, quarantined *from* routine and comfort, quarantined *for* safety and love of neighbor...even in the midst of these current quarantines, life in Jesus is an abundant life. But having life abundantly does not mean having lots of stuff, or lots of money, or even being with your family when others choose not to or aren't able to. Having life abundantly means recognizing and trusting our Lord, our Good Shepherd, the one who guards our gate, the one who keeps the thieves that would steal our hope and trust at bay, the one who gives us what we truly need. Having life abundantly means trusting in Jesus' promises, Jesus' life, Jesus' love. Having life abundantly changes our perspective, our attitude, our definitions of what "abundance" means, and of what to be thankful for.

I know a lot of you feel trapped these days. Captive to Covid. Restricted by restrictions. Well, having life abundantly sets us free from anything life can throw at us, even all of this. It changes "we

aren't allowed to" into "for the sake of our neighbors, we are." It changes "I'm so sick of this" to "with God's help, I am able." It changes "I'm a prisoner in my house" to "I am thankful to be safe."

There's someone in the Bible with a perspective on imprisonment: Paul. He was jailed many times for the sake of the gospel. And it never stopped him from sharing that good news anyway. With fellow inmates. With jailers. And, through his letters, with the fledgling church he had helped to found and nurture. (And all of us still reading those letters today.)

Paul wrote a letter to the church in Philippi, from prison, where he said, "I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret to being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress."

Again – he wrote this *from prison*. He's talking about being content. About having life in abundant-enough quantities, no matter what, to be content in the Lord. To have enough, whether it's feast or famine. Whether he's facing the very real dangers of famine or the less-obvious but still real dangers of feast, Paul's response is the same: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." The Good Shepherd strengthens him. That's abundant life.

I invite you to tap into that abundance this year. To let God change your perspective. To find yourself squarely centered in "enough" in spite of this year's circumstances, whether you're feeling feast or famine. I invite you to tap into deep thankfulness, deeper than just going around a table and making a list. Pray about where God is at work in your life, and what you can be thankful for. Maybe you're in distress right now, like Paul, but you have someone to share that distress, to help carry that burden – that's something to be thankful for, too.

Some things that we're thankful for are fleeting, like the beautiful autumn leaf that inevitably falls as it gives way to winter. But some things are more consistent: like the tree that generates the leaves, the source of their life, that keeps growing through all seasons. In your thanksgivings this week and beyond, I prayerfully invite you to shift your emphasis from the windfalls – the temporary positives, to the source of our life, our Lord and Shepherd and King.

Pray for the perception to know your abundance, even in your hardest times, even in 2020, even in your times of captivity, your times of scarcity. Pray for the perception to know your abundance, even in your most-provided-for times, the bounteous times, when it's easier to take the blessings for granted, or to covet the next thing, and the next thing, and the next thing. Shift your emphasis away from the windfalls and to the one who strengthens and nourishes, through whom we can do all things. The one who gives abundant life.

*Thanks be to God. Amen.*

## Give Thanks

Give thanks with a grate-ful heart, give thanks to the Ho-ly One,  
give thanks be-cause he's giv-en Je-sus Christ, his Son.

Give thanks with a grate-ful heart, give thanks to the Ho-ly One,  
give thanks be-cause he's giv-en Je-sus Christ, his Son.

And now let the weak say, "I am strong," let the poor say, "I am  
rich," be-cause of what the Lord has done for us. And  
now let the weak say, "I am strong," let the poor say, "I am  
rich," be-cause of what the Lord has done for us. Give thanks!

*Last time*

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The lyrics are placed below the vocal line. The score includes a repeat sign and a first ending bracket labeled "Last time".

Text: Henry Smith  
Music: GIVE THANKS. Henry Smith

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### Closing Litany

The world is filled with the glory of God, and we say,

**Thank you!**

The hills and valleys are filled with color, and we say,

**Thank you!**

The vines and trees are filled with fruit, and we say,

**Thank you!**

Our tables are overflowing with food, and we say,

**Thank you!**

Our life is filled with love of family and friends, and we say,

**Thank you!**

We lift our voices to God, saying,

**Thank you!**

May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts  
be acceptable to you, O God,  
as we live in service to you, filled with thanksgiving and praise.

Blessing

May the Lord of all creation  
shower his blessings and favor upon you.

**Amen**

May the Lord of the harvest  
grant your Thanksgiving with his presence  
and fill you with peace.

**Amen**

May the Lord of salvation  
guide you all your days  
until you come into the joys of his eternal kingdom.

**Amen**

And may almighty God, Father, + Son and Holy Spirit,  
bless you now and forever.

**Amen**

Grace

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;**

**Praise God, all creatures here below;**

**Praise God above, ye heav'nly host;**

**Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**