

Thanksgiving  
November 28, 2024  
Pastor Jasper Sellnow



Theme: Remember the LORD  
Text: **Deuteronomy 8:10-18**

**<sup>10</sup> When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. <sup>11</sup> Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. <sup>12</sup> Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, <sup>13</sup> and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, <sup>14</sup> then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. <sup>15</sup> He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. <sup>16</sup> He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. <sup>17</sup> You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” <sup>18</sup> But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.**

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The Word of God we'll consider today is our first lesson from Deuteronomy chapter 8. Let's begin with prayer:

*We thank you for your blessings, Almighty Lord, our King; We thank you for the harvest, Yes, Lord, for ev'rything... But best of all your blessings, The rainbow of your love, Are all the many mercies Your word brings from above. Amen. (Christian Worship hymn 615 vs. 1 and 3 alt.)*

The theme for our Thanksgiving sermon today is “Remember the LORD.” It's borrowed from the final verse of our sermon text today and is not all that surprising of a thought as we gather to worship God before going off to our Thanksgiving meals and celebrations. “Remember the LORD...” Ok... that's why we're all here pastor! We remember the Lord. We are not like the 9 healed men from the Gospel lesson who ran off without pausing to thank the Lord for his blessings... we are here in God's house because we want to offer thanksgiving to you before enjoying Thanksgiving with family or friends. We remember the LORD!

Well... if that's how you feel today, that's fine. I'm glad you are here to thank God. I'm glad that you recognize God's blessings and find it appropriate to pause to thank him on this holiday. But as we all know... being thankful... remembering the Lord... doesn't always come so easily to us. Apart from this one day we set aside as a national day of thanks, do we always, daily, hourly, remember the Lord? Do we remember that **every good and perfect gift is from above?** Do we remember that it is the Lord who **opens his hands and satisfies the desires of every living**

**thing?** Do we remember that it is he **who forgives all our sins, and heals all our diseases?** Or do we sometimes forget?

This Thanksgiving as we consider God's Word let us be encouraged to "Remember the LORD" at all times and in all circumstances. Because we always have reason to remember our God and give him thanks.

In our sermon text from Deuteronomy God's people Israel heard a message from Moses who did not want them to forget all that the Lord had done for them, and all that the Lord would do for them in the future. Prior to their entrance into the promised land of Canaan, Moses encourages them to remember the Lord as they prepare to receive abundant new blessings, and to fight the temptation to forget the Lord when things are going well. He said:

**<sup>10</sup> When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. <sup>11</sup> Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. <sup>12</sup> Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, <sup>13</sup> and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, <sup>14</sup> then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God...**

And how is it that they would forget the Lord in the midst of such plentiful blessings? Well Moses goes on to explain... **<sup>17</sup> You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."**

It is tempting, isn't it, to think more of our efforts than God's when it comes to our earthly blessings? Just think of the many different blessings that are commonly celebrated... We congratulate new parents at the birth of a child... we applaud our friends who get a promotion at work... we brag about our kids and grandkids when they win the big game or graduate high school or college...

And ya know, maybe you're sitting here thinking... "But Pastor, I do remember to thank the Lord in all those circumstances..." Well, if that's the case, wonderful! You can continue to do so, and be a humble model of faith for your family and friends...

But what about when the blessings are not so apparent? What about when life feels like it's full of curses, not blessings? Do we remember the Lord then? How do we react when death rips a loved one from us before we were ready? How do we respond when instead of a promotion we get a pink slip? Is praise still on our lips when we lose the big game, or drop out of school...?

Or what about this Thanksgiving? For some of you there will be plenty of family, food, and football to make your day a joyful and satisfying affair. But for others of you the fridge won't really be as full as you'd like... there may be a spot, or two, missing at the dinner table which tinges the whole day with sadness... Maybe because of what is going on in your life you don't feel particularly thankful at the moment...

Well... the Lord encourages us today in his Word to remember him not only in times of plenty but also in times of need... If we are well fed and living in relative peace and happiness... don't forget the reason you have such blessings... remember the Lord. But if you are hungry and living with frustration and sadness... don't forget that there is still hope and a future for you... there are greater gifts we know are coming that cannot be touched by earthly doom and gloom... and we remember this when we remember the Lord.

And when we stop and think about our failures to remember the Lord, we are reminded all the more of how little we deserve any good gift from him. The fact that he gives us the ability to produce wealth... and family and friends to sustain us when we can't anymore... this is a testament to his goodness. Clothing and shoes, house, home, family, friends, animals, possessions... we don't deserve any of it. But we have such things because the Lord loves us and cares for us.

And even when the good gifts are taken away we still have the greatest gifts of all because of our gracious God... the gifts that we truly don't deserve. Our sin naturally separates us from God. We don't deserve forgiveness, or faith, or the Word, or a Savior, to say nothing of food, clothing, and shelter. We deserve to be cut off from God and his blessings now on earth and forever in hell.

But God's love gives us what we do not deserve. Yes, we are given food on our tables and clothes on our backs... but such things pale in comparison to the eternal blessings God has poured out on us in place of the curses we deserve. In place of wrath we find forgiveness... In place of punishment we are given peace... And it's all because the Lord in love did not forget us or give up on us... no the Lord remembered us! And he rescued us by sending Jesus to live and die in our place. It is our crucified and risen Redeemer who gives us the assurance that God truly does love us and has our best interest at heart. And as Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans: **If God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?** This is the good news that makes thanksgiving not just a day on our calendar but a way of life for the believer. Jesus died and rose for me, yes even for me. And so I know I am forgiven. I know heaven is waiting. I know that God is with me and that he is always for me – no matter what comes my way in this life.

And what then is the response of the believer to such love...? Well... we no longer take for granted the amazing gifts we are given... and we don't doubt God's love when the gifts are taken away, because we know we still have the Giver... and so we know there will be better and lasting gifts in store for us soon. This also means that we don't let our many failures before God bring us grief this time of year or ever. God is not looking for guilt as our response to his goodness and grace... no, as forgiven children of God there is no guilt... only gratitude for God's faithfulness, and a desire to ever rest in his grace.

My friends, whether you eat a sumptuous feast today or a can of soup... whether you join with dozens to celebrate or sit alone... no matter if joy or sadness meets you this Thanksgiving... I pray that you remember the Lord. Remember his goodness as the cause for all your joy... Remember his love and mercy which will sustain you in all sadness... And remember that the

day is coming when you will awake in heaven and any sadness and sin will be forgotten like a bad dream. Yes, brothers and sisters, remember the Lord this Thanksgiving and always. Amen.

**Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his mercy endures forever. Amen.**