

Thanksgiving Gathering: Praise & Prayer

OPENING HYMN #609 "We Praise You, O God, Our Redeemer"

M: Heavenly Father, Creator of all things, you give us all that we need for body and life.

C: Every good and perfect gift comes from you, the Father of the heavenly lights.

James 1:17

M: Lord Jesus Christ, by your suffering and death you have opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

C: We approach your throne, O God, with confidence, for mercy and grace in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

M: Holy Spirit, counselor and guide, you have raised us from death by your powerful Word.

C: You, O Spirit of God, have made us. Your breath, almighty One, gave us life.

Job 33:4

M: Lord, fill our hearts with thanksgiving for your mercy and love.

C: Move us with our hearts to believe and with our mouths to confess your saving name. Amen.

Romans 10:10

Confession & Absolution & Thanksgiving

M: As we this day offer our thanksgiving and praise, let us reflect upon our many sins and confess them before our God and LORD, asking Him to forgive us for the sake of Jesus, His Son:

Pastor faces the altar, and all join in speaking...

C: "Lord, the eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food at the proper time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing."

M: We come before You to confess our sins, including our ingratitude and lack of appreciation for all the blessings You have given us.

C: We confess to You, O Lord, that we have not given You thanks for all Your generous blessings; nor have we shown gratitude or appreciation, but too often we have grumbled and complained. For these sins and all our other wicked thoughts, words, and actions, we deserve to be punished. But we appeal to Your mercy and ask You to forgive us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

M: The LORD, our gracious Father has forgiven all our sins through the suffering and death of His one and only Son, Jesus; and with His resurrection from the dead has given us the hope of everlasting life. God in His Word has declared,

C: "the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from every sin."

M: He also assures us:

C: "You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

M: Therefore, give thanks to God for our salvation! You are forgiven. Go in peace.

C: Amen

HYMN #256, vs.1,3 &4 "How Great Thou Art"

The Word

Part One: Give thanks to the Father!

You sit around the table at Thanksgiving with family and friends. You eat. You talk. Worries or concerns might be a part of the conversation you chew on. Someone's finances are uncertain, or another person doesn't know if they'll be in another town or out of another job in the next few months.

Jesus tells you: your Father in heaven has a home out of this world waiting for you. While you are here on the earth: He feeds you, clothes you, takes care of you in every way needed.

So where does worry fit in? It doesn't really. Yet, here we are talking about worry.

Jesus addressed worry head on – 3 times here he says to us: “do not worry.” Jesus gives some examples of common worries that span across cultural barriers, age groups and time periods:

- ✘ “Don't worry about what you will eat or drink; don't worry about what you will wear.”
- ✘ Worry about food or drink seeps down through all ages. How far? I did it. I've heard my kids do it. Saying: “I'm starving.”
- ✘ Worry about clothes extends its reach. How far? We're not wondering: “What am I going to do if this set of clothes wears out?” Instead, tweens & teens have been known to fling open a closet full of clothes and cry: “I've got nothing to wear!” Or, we worry: “Do I have the right clothes? Am I going to fit in – impress wearing this?”

Jesus' examples of worry hit home across cultures, economic demographics, and ages.

Jesus describes Christian “worriers” as: “you of little faith.” When you hear that, you hear what is at the root of worry. What causes worry?

- ✘ Weakness of faith – smallness of faith. Maybe a portion from allowing busyness to crowd out time with our Father in heaven, where His Word reminds us just who He is and what He promises and what He's already done to prove his faithfulness.

Note: Jesus does not say there is an absence of faith. He is talking to his followers here. They still trust in him. But there's a weakness.

Complete this thought: our Father has promised to provide us with our needs (food, drink, clothing); worrying about these is...

- ✘ 1) needless fear; 2) unnecessary anxiety; 3) possibly, a symptom of wanting to control something which our heavenly Father promises he'll handle perfectly well.

The frustration for me – the Christian – is: I am tempted to believe what I see or think might happen. I worry despite my Father's promise, despite his faithful love demonstrated again and again – I know worry with its baggage is not what He wants for me.

Address worry head on. Bring it to the Lord. Confess when you've sinned. Ask Him to remove it. And what does the Father promise? 1 John 1:7-9: The blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.

God lifts us out of worry – bringing us to the height of worship. Thanksgiving for the forgiveness of sins is at the top of the list of blessings God gives to us. As we remember he forgives us, we'll more easily keep in view how he gives us all we need for physical life as well. David says, “Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who forgives all your sins” (Psalm 103:2-3).

Hear your Father's promises: He feeds, values and provides for you in every way needed. Be comforted. Be strengthened in faith. Be inspired to thanksgiving.

Matthew 6:25-34

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?”

26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

RESPONSIVE CREED

M: I believe that God created me and all that exists,

C: **and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members, my mind and all my abilities.**

M: And I believe that God still preserves me

C: **by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, spouse and children, land, cattle, and all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life.**

M: God also preserves me by defending me against all danger,

C: **and guarding and protecting me from all evil.**

M: All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven,

C: **and not because I have earned or deserved it.**

M: For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him.

C: **This is most certainly true.**

HYMN #260

“Let All Things Now Living”

Part Two: Give thanks to the Son!

It would be a great statement-starter at a Thanksgiving Day gathering... everybody take a turn and complete this statement: “We have...” I bet you’d end up with quite a list of examples of things for which to be thankful to God. Let’s try it now. [Start with the youngest, and each take a turn completing: “We have...”]

In these verses we find the phrase “we have” 5 times. Look at all we have.

Listen to the list of examples here:

- ✘ **We have** been justified through faith [in God’s courtroom we are declared “not guilty” & free in Jesus]
- ✘ **We have** peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ
- ✘ **We have** gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand [we stand in God’s forgiveness, and the gate to heaven stands open to us all through faith in Jesus]
- ✘ **We have** now been justified by Jesus’ blood
- ✘ **We have** now received reconciliation with God [Jesus has made everything right between our God & us]

Wow! What a list! Look at all we have! Thank you, Jesus! [Pause]

But how often does our prayer of thanks get swallowed up by: “Look at what they have.” If it is not spoken, it is sometimes thought.

- ✘ “They – my neighbors – have... a nicer house.”
- ✘ “They – my in-laws – have... the job that allows them to travel, and still stash away plenty for the future & retirement.”

- ✘ “They – my friends – have... the newest computer, the highest definition and smartest TV set, the fanciest bike or ATV or vehicle, the nicest golf clubs in their garage, the prettiest clothes in their closets, the best tasting food on their plates...”

“Look at what they have.” Complete the thought: Such a statement is a source of spiritual trouble, if...

- ✘ Answer: I’m not content with what God has given to me, and I covet things that belong to others.

Go back to the list that God has written for us, if you find yourself comparing or complaining. And rejoice that:

- ✘ **We have** been justified through faith in Jesus
- ✘ **We have** peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ
- ✘ **We have** gained access by faith in Jesus into this grace in which we now stand
- ✘ **We have** now been justified by his Jesus’ blood
- ✘ **We have** now received reconciliation with God through Jesus’ saving work

Others might appear to have everything! But it wears out, needs replacing, becomes obsolete, gets dumped in the junk pile, gets lost in cyberspace, or ends up in the grave. Look at what we have. What we have lasts forever! “Look at what we have! ...through Jesus.”

And we have all this...

- ✘ Not by our own doing – quite the opposite: “we were powerless, we were ungodly, we were God’s enemies.”
- ✘ We have all this by Jesus’ doing. Our God has done everything for us: “God loved us, Christ died for us, we are saved from God’s wrath through him.”

For all that we have, we give you thanks, Lord. Thank you, Jesus!

Romans 5:1-2, 6-11

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. 6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! 10 For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11 Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

RESPONSIVE CREED

M: I believe that Jesus Christ,

C: **true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord.**

M: He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature,

C: **purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil,**

M: not with gold or silver,

C: **but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.**

M: All this he did that I should be his own,

C: **and live under him in his kingdom,**

M: and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness,

C: **just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.**

Part Three: Give thanks to the Holy Spirit!

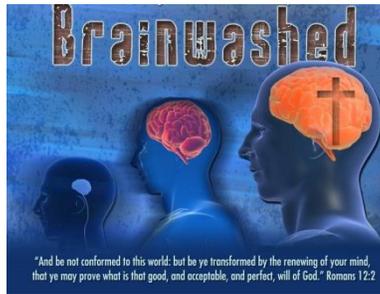
A diverse group of family and / or friends is sometimes pulled together for the Thanksgiving meal. You may encounter the person who just doesn't understand your faith in an unseen God. "How can you believe everything in the Bible? Christians seemed brainwashed if you ask me."

Brainwashed. What do you think of when you hear that phrase?

- ✗ Most likely: it sounds negative.
- ✗ It says: you're someone unknowingly, mindlessly doing what another person wants.

Look at this image, entitled "brainwashed".

- ✗ It's most positive.
- ✗ Sins forgiven. At peace with God. thank & to live for the one who has



And tell me what you think?

Excited by the opportunity to given us all these blessings.

He died for me. I live for him. When I have in washed of sin, I want to serve the one who

mind how I have been has washed & saved me.

Our verses speak of "the mind controlled by a negative "mind control" – not an unwilling, unknowing service. This is describing the willing, loving response from Christians to all God's goodness to us.

the Holy Spirit." But this is not

- ✗ Romans 7:6 ...we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.
- ✗ Romans 6:14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.
- ✗ Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
- ✗ 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

Note the Holy Spirit's gracious working. The Holy Spirit is the one who brings us to faith. The Holy Spirit then lives in you and me. The Holy Spirit assures our hearts that we are children of God and heirs of heaven through faith in Jesus Christ. With that in view, the Holy Spirit inspires our hearts and minds to willingly, joyfully thank and serve God.

Romans 8:5-17

5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. 9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. 12 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

RESPONSIVE CREED

M: I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.

C: **But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel,**

M: enlightened me with his gifts,

C: **sanctified and kept me in the true faith.**

M: In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth,

C: **and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.**

M: In this Christian Church he daily and fully

C: **forgives all sins to me and all believers.**

M: On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead,

C: **and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.**

HYMN #191

“Father Most Holy”

OFFERING

PRAYER

M: Father in heaven, we give you thanks. You gave us life and formed our bodies in the womb. You have preserved us over the years by providing for all our needs. You control the weather, ensuring ample supplies of food.

C: **You give us family and friends. You keep our society stable through the various branches of our government. You protect and defend us day after day. Each of us offers private thanks for your many gifts.**

Silent prayer

M: Jesus, we give you thanks. True God from eternity, you put aside your heavenly glory to become human like us. You lived the kind of life we should, following perfectly all the commandments. You died the kind of death we should, receiving the total and just punishment for our sin.

C: **What love you have shown us! We thank you for reconciling us to your Father through your holy, precious blood. We praise you for rising from the dead. We exalt you for winning for us the gift of eternal life. Each of us offers private thanks for your saving works.**

Silent prayer

M: Holy Spirit, we give you thanks. By our own thinking and choosing we cannot believe in Jesus Christ or come to him. By your powerful means of grace you called us to faith, revealing to us God’s great love in Christ.

C: **We praise you for the Holy Scriptures, inspired by you. We thank you for the sacraments. Through these means of grace, you begin and preserve faith in Christ.**

M: You move and lead us to live in a sanctified way. We exalt you for sanctifying us to serve the Lord and our neighbor.

C: **You have guarded and defended the Christian church through the ages. We thank you for your many blessings to our congregation in the past year. Each of us offers private thanks for your many blessings.**

Silent Prayer

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

HYMN #517

"Almighty Father, Strong to Save"

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

C: Amen

HYMN #610, vs.3