

"God and the Seventh"

Text: Psalm 100

Grace, mercy and peace be yours in the certain knowledge that the One True God is not only your Creator, he is also the God who loves you with a holy and everlasting love, and who sent his Son to save you. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

So, how are you doing with the Commandments? Keeping them? Let's narrow the field. How about the Seventh Commandment? Are you doing a pretty good job keeping that one? This morning we are going to seek insight by asking the question a little differently: *has anyone ever stolen from you?* If so, my guess is that you will probably never forget that feeling when you first realized that someone had invaded your property (violated your space) and taken from you of what is yours. If nothing else, such things teach us an added dimension to the 7th Commandment. You and I never want to make someone else experience that sense of violation by taking what is rightfully theirs.

But we do, don't we? In many different ways we take what is not ours – heedless of the loss or pain that we cause. We rob our employers whenever we slack off on company time, or "borrow" company property beyond our authority to do so. A man robs his own wife whenever he takes what belongs to his wife alone and offers it to another woman – everything from simple attention and flirtation to marital intimacy. Women rob their husbands of the respect that God commands when they fail to honor his headship. Children rob their parents of obedience and the joy that obedience brings; parents rob their children of time and attention when they fail to listen and lead as God commanded.

How silly to imagine that we are in any way innocent when it comes to God's "***Thou shalt not steal.***" We all routinely fail to live up to the perfect standard of the 7th Commandment – which leads to another question, another rather disturbing thought: given the fact that human beings routinely fail to keep the 7th Commandment in connection with each other, is it possible that we are also stealing from our God? Is a human being even *capable* of robbing God?

Keep that question in the back of your mind as you read our text for this morning, all five verses of Psalm 100:

^{ESV} **Psalm 100:1-5** *Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! ² Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!*

³ *Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. ⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! ⁵ For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.*

So far the very words of our God. Mindful that these words have a holy, perfect, divine origin, and also reminding ourselves that these words were not just written for *others* but are intended by our God for *our own personal* application and growth, so we pray: "***Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth.***" Amen.

Did you get it? What was the theft indicated by our text? To answer, compare what is here written with other sections of God's Word, like 1 Chronicles 16:29: "***Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him! Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.***"

Our God describes himself as "***a jealous God***" not because he is insecure or temperamental, but because he is absolutely just and holy. As a just and holy God he demands what is right, and he therefore also rightfully demands what is rightfully his. Honor and glory, praise and thanksgiving certainly head the list of what mortals owe to their Creator. Psalm 100 (our text) outlines not just what human beings *ought to consider* rendering to their God, it tells us what God *deserves* – because such things are rightfully his. The list includes things like "***joyful noise... glad service... singing... thanksgiving... praise... blessings.***" These are the sorts of things that ought to flow naturally and without interruption from all mankind. Withholding any or all represents the most shameful sort of robbery and is certainly anything but pleasing to the God *who created us.*

And that is where it all begins, isn't it – with creation? When mankind first toyed with the notion that he had, in effect, created himself, he began to rob God in ways never before imagined. Satan was absolutely delighted at man's utter foolishness. Make no mistake; there is not a single evil angel, not a single demon, that believes in evolution. Not one. To every single one of them the very notion of evolution is utter nonsense – and they ought to know since they were there. The angels were also created on one of the six days of creation – including those angels that later fell away. What is more, those angels are still alive, which means they have no doubt that evolution is a pure lie of the lowest order, which is also why they love it. Since they know full well just who created both them and us, they are absolutely

thrilled with Darwin's colossal disservice to mankind. Why? Because it serves as the getaway car for the ongoing robbery of God himself. That is also why the godless rage against any and all who seek to disabuse mankind of the folly of evolution.

When Dr. David Menton – a well-known creation advocate – taught at George Washington University in St. Louis, he received a fair amount of persecution and ridicule for his Christian beliefs. Yet he says that that persecution was as nothing compared to the rage and animosity he experienced as one of the consultants for the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky. The demonic forces that hold such sway in our society today fly into a raging panic at anything and everything that seeks to break their evolutionary stranglehold on souls throughout the world. Beings that absolutely and thoroughly hate God do not want God to receive the praise and honor that he deserves, and their job is made so much easier whenever God is robbed of his title as *Creator* of all that exists. Such evil is hard for the children of God to comprehend, but we would do well to acknowledge and prepare for it. In fact I'm not sure we have any point of reference to gauge just how malevolent the devil really is – which is part of the reason so many tend to trivialize both the devil and the very real threat he poses.

In sharp contrast to what Satan wants to see in and from us, and in the most simple and beautiful language, our text lays out the truth: ***"Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."***

If for no other reason, our God is worthy of our praise, honor, and thanksgiving simply because he is our Creator. We owe our very existence to him, and to him alone. Had *he* not created and given to us the life every single one of us now enjoys, we would have no life at all – no experiences of any kind, no joy, no awareness, *nothing*. We simply would never have come into existence. You and I exist, here and now, because our God willed it. He formed us in our mothers' wombs and gave life to our spirits. It would therefore be pure robbery to withhold our honor and praise from the One who created both us and all things.

Yet wouldn't all of this prove rather cold and unfulfilling if we could acknowledge God only as our Maker? Mythology is full of gods who, though powerful beyond human comprehension, nonetheless are believed to spend their time in petty acts of vengeance and mischief. An alarming number of human beings still view the One True God in that way. They see him as a powerful and yet fickle and careless entity who arbitrarily makes bridges collapse under unsuspecting motorists; who allows sadistic thugs to fly planeloads of women and children into crowded buildings; and

who brings sickness and disease to snatch even the good and gentle in the very prime of their lives.

It would indeed be cold comfort for the Psalmist to call for praise and thanksgiving for such a god. Fortunately, he did not, because that's not our God. A closer look at our text reveals that the inspired writer called for praise and thanksgiving for the one God that is, in all ways, worthy. Certainly it is good and right to ***"make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands!"*** How appropriate to ***"serve the LORD with gladness"*** and to ***"come before His presence with singing."*** Yet we do so not just because we ***"know that the LORD, He is God"*** and that ***"it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves."*** We do so also because we know the true *character* of our God; we know that (again in the words of our text) ***"the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations."***

What exactly does that mean, that ***"the LORD is good"*** and that ***"his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations"***? It means Jesus Christ, sacrificed to pay our sin debt. And here at least – in connection with Jesus – we can know that man cannot rob God. Here, in connection with God's payment for our sins, man cannot possibly take from God what is his alone. Or can he?

The reality is that this is where the greatest, most common, and most egregious robbery of God takes place. Man obviously has no power to save himself by his own works. If he could, God the Father would never have sacrificed his own dear Son. Yet countless millions today rob God when they fail to believe or even acknowledge his greatest act of kindness in sending his Son. Mankind robs Jesus Christ of the glory that is his every single time he tries to pay his own sin debt – or any part of that debt – by his own works or goodness. Think for a moment of what an affront it is to our Triune God to reject and discard the gift of free forgiveness earned for us by the sacrifice of God's own Son, and to try instead to earn that payment ourselves.

Our feeble, human minds have a difficult time grasping the nature and character of our God. We hear him referred to as ***"one God in three Persons,"*** but there's really no way for us to grasp the nature of that union. But part of what that means is that it is unacceptable to consider God the Father without or apart from Jesus Christ. Man robs God every time he does so. It is also wrong to consider God the Father without the Holy Spirit, who not only willed our salvation to the point that he brought saving faith into our hearts, but who also continually intercedes for us ***"with groanings which cannot be***

uttered." (Romans 8:26) Man actually robs God in more ways than we realize.

This has always been the way things are – we reward our God for his perfect goodness with our miserable failure to give him proper credit. Understand that God the Father didn't suddenly change his mind and decide to show mankind compassion by sending his Son to pay the penalty for our sins. The love and the compassion that we see in Jesus Christ was *always* an inseparable part of our Creator God – from all eternity. That means that God the Father loved you and me even before we were born. The same love that we see so clearly in Jesus Christ has also always been present in equal measure in God the Father. Before the world was ever created, God the Father determined to sacrifice his Son on our behalf. In fact all of history prior to the coming of Jesus is simply one big, complex preparation for that central, pivotal, monumental event. So also Galatians 4:4-5 teaches us that **"when the fullness of the time had come, (that is, when the time was just right) God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."**

This is the sort of God that we have, and that is why the Psalmist could shout his praise and thanksgiving during good times and bad, for always **"the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations."** The same Promise that we see fulfilled in the empty tomb is that which God the Father himself spoke already in the Garden of Eden after the fall into sin. It is the same promise of love that was repeated even as the remnant of Israel was carried off into the Babylonian Captivity. Even when all things, present and future, seemed dark and foreboding, still **"the Lord was good, and his mercy endured."**

Now then what about you? Are your days now filled with tears? Still the Lord is good, and his mercy endures – also for you – and still God is worthy of your praise. Are you anxious, fearful, frustrated? Still the Lord is good, and his mercy endures, and he is worthy of your praise and thanksgiving. Or are your days now full of happiness and contentment, laughter, celebration, and an eager anticipation of the future? Most have little trouble agreeing that the Lord is good when things seem to be going well, but we tend to do so for the wrong reasons. Our God certainly *is* good, but his goodness is not defined by how we view his treatment of us, or how we view our current situation. The very *nature* of our God is good, which means that he can *never* treat us badly or unfairly. Everything that he allows into our lives is therefore a testament to his love and compassion and goodness, and is therefore also a cause for our thanksgiving and praise.

It all comes back, again, to Jesus Christ and the undeserved love of our God. The Lord God is worthy of our praise and thanksgiving because he has forgiven you and me of every single one of our sins, having decided from eternity to punish his own Son in our place. That is the simple decree that will endure forever, for no one and nothing can rob *us* of the payment of our sin debt made for us by our Savior God. So also wrote Paul to the Romans: **"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."** (Romans 8:38-39)

Dear Christian, know then that your God is always worthy. Resolve never to rob him of the praise, honor, thanksgiving, and service to which he is most certainly entitled. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Colossians 3:1-11** If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵ ¶ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

^{ESV} **Luke 12:13-21** Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." ¹⁴ But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵ And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." ¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' ¹⁸ And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

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The 11th Sunday after Pentecost – July 31, 2016

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 26 (*Verses 1-4*) (*Red Hymnal*)

"Praise the Lord, My Soul, Adore Him"

The Order of Morning Service – *Red Hymnal page 5.*

The Scripture Lessons: (*Printed on the back of the bulletin*)

The Epistle Lesson: (Colossians 3:1-11) Faith in Jesus Christ changes everything. Our view of the world, our desires, how we deal with our passions – everything is changed when we "put on the new man" and thereby walk in harmony with God's will. So Paul here holds out comfort to the Colossian Christians who once followed the passions of their sinful hearts, but who had recently come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Embrace the change that the Holy Spirit has worked in you.

The Gospel Lesson: (Luke 12:13-21) How mightily Jesus struggled to raise the people of his generation above the worldly, visible plane and to fix their attention and hearts on things eternal. So also today God grants us "wake-up calls" to teach us how truly meaningless are the cares and riches of this temporal world. Turn daily to God's Word for strength and Satan will be powerless to destroy the faith you have been given.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed (*Red Hymnal page 12*)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn - 36 (*Red Hymnal*)

"Now Thank We All Our God"

The Sermon - Text: Psalm 100 (*Printed on the back page*)

"God and the Seventh"

"Create In Me" (The Offertory) (*Red Hymnal page 12*)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 798 (*Brown Hymnal*)

"God We Praise You"

The Offering, followed by the Prayers

The Closing Hymn – 26 (*Verses 5-6*) (*Red Hymnal*)

"Praise the Lord, My Soul, Adore Him"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with congregations throughout the United States, as well as mission affiliates scattered around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

Attendance - Sunday (42) Average (48)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship/coffee time
Friday-Saturday	-10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.	– Vacation Bible School
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship/coffee time

CLC News – Pastor Matthew Ude has returned the call to Ascension Lutheran of Batavia (Chicago area). Faith of Markesan has called Pastor Luke Bernthal. Pastor Del Maas is considering the call to Mt. Zion of Detroit. Pastor Earnest Bernet has resigned from the pastorate of Zion, Atlanta, GA.

WELS/ELS meetings – The next inter-synod meeting is scheduled for Friday, August 26, at Mankato. The main item on the agenda is a discussion of how to view membership in an organization with religious elements, such as Thrivent.

Vacation Bible School – This year's VBS is scheduled for Friday and Saturday of this week. Sessions begin at 10:00 a.m. and end at 3:00 p.m. It is not too late to bring a friend! Please let the Pastor know if you do, so that we can have enough materials on hand.

Hecla Installation – Pastor-elect Timothy Daub is tentatively scheduled to be installed as the new pastor of Prince of Peace in Hecla in an afternoon service on August 21. More information will be forthcoming as plans are finalized.

Assisted Hearing Devices – We now have hearing assisted devices available for any who are having trouble hearing the Pastor during our worship services. If you would like to try one of the devices, please speak to the Pastor prior to this morning's service, or at your earliest convenience for use in future services.