

Thanksgiving – 2018

"Check Your Bank Account"

Text: 1 Timothy 6:6-17

Grace, mercy and peace – certainly three of God's greatest gifts to mankind – be multiplied to each of you as you give thanks to your Savior God for his innumerable blessings on this Thanksgiving Eve. Amen.

Dear Fellow Recipients of God's unlimited generosity:

Our text for this special service of thanksgiving is found in Paul's First Letter to Timothy, the Sixth Chapter:

ESV 1 Timothy 6:6-17 *Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. ¹¹ ¶ But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴ to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which he will display at the proper time--he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. ¹⁷ ¶ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.*

These are the very words of God. They are thus, in and of themselves, precious *gifts* that we never want to take for granted. To help prepare our hearts for the study of these words, and to remind us of their divine

origin, so we pray, "***Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth.***" Amen.

Maybe you've been in this sort of situation so it won't take much imagination. A friend comes to you and is just down, demoralized, depressed. He's sure it's not a physiological problem (like clinical depression) and he's not thinking about harming himself, he's just down. All of his other friends are telling him exactly what he expected them to say but it doesn't seem to be helping. They all seem to try to cheer him up by telling him just how much he still has to live for. In other words, the best counsel that the world can offer is not only self-centered, it's based on greed: *Cheer up, because you can still get more out of life – more fun, more love, more stuff.* That's actually the bottom line with the godless, isn't it? What can I still get out of this life? When the answer is "nothing," or "not much," then it's time to go.

Here again Christians should and do see life differently. Christians know that greed is never the solution for anything. But thankfulness is.

So what should you say to someone who is down? Try this: "*Check your bank account.*" Bear with me here. We first need to define and better understand what we mean by "bank account."

A truly thankful heart doesn't look forward; it looks backwards. There is and should be trust that God will continue to care for his children, but that really doesn't help someone who neither knows nor trusts God's promises. What *does* help is to honestly evaluate all the good things that *are* yours, all the good things that *have already been given to you.*

This is, in fact, exactly why we bring up something like this on this Thanksgiving Eve. It is part of what we hope to accomplish this evening – to give thanks to our God for the "in the bank done deals" of this life, and thereby to learn to truly trust him with our temporal and eternal futures going forward, even when things might look bleak. Even very bleak. Obviously that is going to require some thought and explanation if we are really going to get how this all works.

There are basically two different ways for each human being to live his life – with optimism based on the good things of the past and the promise of our God, or with pessimism that the great life that we now

enjoy is both inadequate somehow and will likely not get any better. Our text describes the first frame of mind with these words: **Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.** Our text also describes the second frame of mind (the pessimistic, anxious, demoralized outlook) with these words: **But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.**

Our God doesn't leave it to our imagination which frame of mind he would have us adopt as our own. Our text goes on: **"But as for you, O man of God, flee these things** (the discontented, anxious, frustrating quest for stuff). **Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called."** God has not called us to pessimism and anxiety but to optimism and contentment – and to a higher, deeper relationship with him.

The connection between these things is not always readily apparent. It takes some thought and work to connect things like contentment with optimism. This evening we will seek to make those connections – between contentment and optimism on the one hand, and pessimism and lack of contentment on the other. This is an important study, since our quality of life (the quality of our time of grace here in time) usually hangs in the balance.

Every single person here this evening can list countless examples of "done deals" in your lives that lend themselves to an ongoing sense of optimism going forward. By "done deal" we mean those things that have already been given to us – blessings that we have already received, that are "in the bank." A partial list would include your faith, your spouse, your children, parents, house, standard of living, creature comforts, plethora of luxuries, toys (for young and old) and the like. It can be something as simple as the fish or deer that didn't get away, the game won, or the unbelievable sale you got on that appliance that had to be replaced on short notice. It can be as big as the fact that you have never known a day in your entire life when you didn't have enough to eat, the diseases you never contracted, the catastrophes that were averted. Obviously this is but a tiny fraction of all that God has done for us, but you get the point.

Yet since true thanksgiving is about the blessings of the past, how does an evaluation of what God has done in the past help to comfort us concerning the present and future?

In Psalm 77, the Psalmist told of his depression at the current state of affairs in his life and of his pessimism regarding the future. Can you guess what changed his attitude? Hear his solution in his own words: **"Then I said, 'I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High. ¹¹ I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. ¹² I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.'" Psalm 77:10-12 His solution was to take a backwards look at what God has done in the past. The obvious lesson that he re-learned was that the God who had done such great things in the past could obviously be trusted to care for him also in the future. Even more to the point, confidence based on God's amazing blessings of the past allow us not only to have a confidence about the present and future, it allows us to put the future on autopilot – set it and forget it.**

In other words, that means that whenever we find ourselves caught up in a pessimistic, depressed, or apprehensive outlook about the present or future, we would do well to ask ourselves, *"What has God ever done in the past to deserve such pessimism from me? When has my God ever demonstrated a lack of love toward me? When has he ever failed to provide me with even more than I need? When has he ever let me down?"*

It is, unfortunately, typical of sinful mankind to look at all that we have been given and to lightly pass it off with an *"Oh that"* and then to follow it up immediately with a *"But what about...?"* – pointing to something that we "lack." Yet understanding that since our God is our loving, wise Good Shepherd, the denials of the past are themselves examples of blessings for which we owe him our thanks. Who here wasn't denied something as a child that would almost certainly have been very bad for you? What parent here hasn't done the same for your own children? We should expect no less from our Heavenly Father. You and I will never know all of the ways our God protected us from unseen dangers (both temporal and spiritual) by denying us those things that he knew would harm us. Having carried us safely to this point in our lives, all of these "blessed denials" are also done deals; they are in-the-bank good things from our God that can never be taken from us. They are gifts that have already been given by God and received by us.

In fact our God has blessed us so lavishly that one of our greatest issues today is guilt. Should we feel guilty that we've got it so good? Our text gives perfect guidance here: **"As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy."** Our God obviously warns us not to trust in temporal things, but note well the balance that is offered here. God gives us these things **"to enjoy."** There is no sin in enjoying with thanksgiving the blessings of our God. As Christians we know instinctively that there is such a thing as excess, and we never want to close our hearts to the needs of others, but we often unnecessarily burden our consciences and complicate our lives when we fail simply to enjoy the blessings that our God has given us with a sense of contentment and thanksgiving. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Now you want to know the best part? The best part is that we haven't even gotten to the best part yet. So far we've only briefly touched on the here and now; we haven't even begun to talk about the hereafter. Clearly the greatest "done deal" is Jesus Christ, and the forgiveness that he has won for every single human being. Nothing can ever change or undo what Jesus has done. In fact it is by far the most valuable asset that we already have in our bank accounts. Our text describes our Savior as **"he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light."** Nothing can make Jesus' death on the cross something less than total victory over sin and Satan. Nothing can ever make it less than the full and complete payment for all of our sins. That Good Friday payment was declared to be an accomplished fact by God the Father when he raised his Son from the dead, and the doubt or denial of the unbelievers doesn't change that divine truth. Truly God has been good to us!

So then back to where we began: what should you say to someone that is demoralized or discouraged by life? Or yourself, for that matter? **"Check your bank account."** Reexamine all the good things that God has already given you and done for you, and be thankful. What you will find is that, once again, when you simply follow God's counsel and to what he told you to do, he will bless you even more. If you find yourself focusing on what you don't have or what is unpleasant or hard in your life, look at what you *do* have, give thanks to God, and he will bless you even further with contentment, peace, comfort, and joy. Amen.

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Thanksgiving Service – November 21, 2018

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 39 *(Red Hymnal)*
"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty"

The Confession of Sins and Absolution

Pastor: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Congregation: If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Pastor: From the conviction of our hearts we confess together:

All: Almighty God, merciful Father, we confess that we were conceived and born with sin. We further confess that we have, since birth, actively sinned against you by our thoughts, words, and actions. We are sorry for our countless sins, and we humble ourselves before your holy presence. Forgive us, for Jesus' sake, and renew us by your Holy Spirit.

Pastor: God the Father has indeed declared you to be not guilty for Jesus' sake. By his command and according to his authority, I announce to you his divine decree that your sins are forgiven, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**[Sung By All] Praise God from whom all blessings flow!
Praise Him, all creatures here below!
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host!
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!**

The Prayer of the Day

The Psalm of the Day - Psalm 146 *(Supplement page 41)*

The Scripture Lessons:

The First Lesson: ^{ESV} **(Luke 17:11-19)** On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance ¹³ and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." ¹⁴ When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶ and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? ¹⁸ Was not one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

[Sung By All]

**Now thank we all our God With heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done, In Whom His world rejoices;
Who, from our mothers' arms, Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, And still is ours today.**

The Second Lesson: ^{ESV} **(1 Timothy 2:1-8)** First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

[Sung By All]

**Oh may this bounteous God Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts And blessed peace to cheer us,
And keep us in His grace, And guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills
In this world and the next.**

The Pre-Sermon Hymn - 425 (Verses 1-2, 4) *(Red Hymnal)*
"All Depends on Our Possessing"

The Sermon Text: ^{ESV} (1 Timothy 6:6-17) Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹ But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. ¹¹ ¶ But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³ I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴ to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which he will display at the proper time--he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. ¹⁷ ¶ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

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The Offertory – [Sung by All]
Supplement Insert, page 16

The Post-Sermon Hymn - 425 (Verses 5-6) *(Red Hymnal)*
"All Depends on Our Possessing"

The Thanksgiving Confession of Faith *(See opposite)*

The Thanksgiving Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 798 (Verses 1 & 4) *(Brown Hymnal)*
"God, We Praise You"

Silent Prayer



Thanksgiving Confession of Faith

I believe in the God who gives every good and perfect gift,
And offer him now my thanksgiving.

I believe in God the Father,
Who created the universe
Who sustains the universe
And who gives us life.

I believe in God the Son, Jesus Christ
Who entered our world
Taking upon himself our human flesh
Whose perfect life, offered on the cross,
Is the full and complete payment for my sin
Who rose from the dead on the third day
Who ascended into heaven
And there lives eternally with God the Father
Speaking to the Father on my behalf
Who will return on the last day
To judge the living and the dead

I believe in God the Holy Spirit
Who, even today, calls, gathers, and enlightens
the whole Christian Church on earth
And preserves me day by day in the Christian faith

I believe in, and am most grateful for, the forgiveness of sins

I believe that all who die in the Christian faith will
by grace through faith
spend eternity with God
thanksgiving forever in our hearts. Amen