

I believe we are a people & a nation that has truly been blessed by God. It is not uncommon to compile wish lists at Christmas, & draw up a list of resolutions for New Years. But there is another list often overlooked - a Thanksgiving list of all for which we are thankful. "I am thankful for: The taxes I pay - because it means I'm employed or I have investment income; The clothes that fit a little too snug - because it means I have enough to eat; A lawn that needs to be mowed, shrubs and palm trees that need to be trimmed, and a garage that needs to be swept out, because it means I have a home; My air conditioning bill and heating bill, because it means I am cool in summer and warm in winter. The repairs on my car, because it means I can drive to places quickly without spending hours walking.

Now our lists might not all be the same, but I'm convinced that if we began to make a list, we would find that we have much more for which to be thankful than just our material possessions. Like you, I'm sure, my list would include the major things life, health, family, friends, & the nation we live in, despite all its flaws. But most of all, I'm thankful for my salvation & the mercy that God showers upon me. Because of Jesus we have so much for which to celebrate on Thanksgiving!

Sometimes members of the Lutheran church are characterized as being somewhat unemotional in worship. Nobody seems to raise their hands up in the air during prayer time, and you don't hear any praise the Lords going on in our worship services. Many of our songs have great lyrics but don't have a melody that makes you want to stand up and sing with gusto. But the writer tells us this thanksgiving, we need to get more emotional. When my Detroit Lions football team is behind by 3 points, and there are only seconds left in the game, and my quarterback, Matthew Stafford throws a touchdown pass to give them the go-ahead, I shout out. Yeah! Way To Go! Wonderful. When we look at all the blessings God has showered on us, its time today to: "Shout For Joy To the Lord!"

First of all, Shout for joy, Because God made you, you are his. Our text says, "Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his."

As people we like authentic things. When we buy products we trust certain brands. I tend to think a lot of Sanyo for a good quality TV. Women look for respected names in clothing. If a lady has a Gucci Ghost purse, a female observer looks at it and says to herself, wow, that's an expensive purse. She must be quite wealthy. Art work also carries prestige. Maybe, you have been out to the Norman Rockwell museum in Stockbridge, MA. IN that museum are paintings worth millions of dollars. One of my favorites is the "Freedom From Want" painting of a mother bringing in a turkey to the dining room table while the family waits to eat. What a talent Norman Rockwell was blessed with in his artwork of people in everyday life situations.

But you and I don't have to travel to Stockbridge, MA to see a precious work of art. What I mean is, you. You are a work of art. You are a one-of-a kind, original work by the greatest artist of all, the LORD. Listen again to our verse. "Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his." Isn't that a wonderful reason to thank the LORD? You are not a cosmic accident but the product of God's genius. The proof is in your fingertips, and in your fingernails, in your beating heart and your active brain. God gave you all that. He made you. He designed you. He fashioned you in your mother's womb. More than that. You're not something God created years ago and then forgot about when he went on to make other people. This is the amazing thing about God: he continues to intimately care about and care for his creation the way a good shepherd cares

about and for his sheep. Thank the LORD. He made us.

But we aren't always thankful, looking at ourselves. We may get dissatisfied. Why God, couldn't you have let me be better at certain things? Why couldn't you have made me taller, more attractive? Why couldn't you have made me like this person, or that person?

A good reminder of God's wisdom is a person with Down's Syndrome. When a family learns that they will have a child with Down's Syndrome, they may feel uncertainty, not knowing what this will be like. But time and again, parents who have a child with developmental disabilities find out that that their child is a blessing to them in ways they couldn't have imagined. The child is so open and sincere, and has a big heart. The child is fun. He or she can be a handful but is also a joy to have in one's life. God works great blessings through people with disabilities, and he will also work great blessings through your physical traits that you consider to be flaws. Shout For Joy. He made us.

Shout For Joy again, he also keeps us. It's sad when parents have a child that they love and care for, but then the child rebels. What's really sad is that each of us is that child. If left to ourselves, we would surely fall away from God, and join the unbelieving world and the devil. But Psalm 100 urges us "Give thanks to him and praise his name." Give thanks here also means, confess. Let's confess to God our rebellion against him. We have not always been content with the way God made us. We have grumbled and complained about things going wrong in our lives. We do not put God first in our every thought and action. We are sinners deserving of punishment. But thank God for showing us this hard fact. For if we didn't know we were sinners, we'd see no need for a Savior, and we would reject Jesus and be condemned. But we know that we are weak. God's law has shown us this. We confess our sins and praise God's name. Because he keeps us, in spite of our sinning against him. He keeps us in spite of our deserving death. The Lord keeps us because he laid down his life for us. The Good Shepherd laid down his life to make us his people, the sheep of his pasture. Even as we call God's Son Jesus we are expressing our thanks. Because the name Jesus means "Savior". As the angel said to Joseph regarding his virgin bride, "she will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

And if you've really thought about it, I haven't hit on the thing we're most thankful for yet. Did you catch the last verse of the psalm: "For the Lord is good and his love is eternal; his faithfulness endures through all generations." Shout for Joy ! Because the God that we worship is indeed good. He gave us this warm place to worship. He gave us our comfy beds to sleep in every night. He surrounds us with caring family and friends. It is he who made those Thanksgiving pies possible by giving us berries and pumpkins for ingredients, and mommies and grandmas to bake them.

But the hardest arithmetic to master is that which allows us to count all our blessings. We're much better at counting up those things which we don't have. I mean if someone gave you a million dollars this morning, would you have any problem spending it by the afternoon? I doubt it because we're always carrying a mental wish list of those things we feel we lack. And it's what we lack that we often become fixated on, forgetting the many blessings we already have.

Why does God put up with such ungrateful people like us? I don't know why but I'm glad that he does. This truth leads to yet another reason we have for giving God

thanks. He deserves our thanks continually because his love for us never ends. The psalmist put it this way: “the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations” ([Psalm 100:5](#)).

God’s love endures forever. Just ponder that statement. It means that God’s love is there even when we’re suffering from sickness or loneliness. His love is there even when we turn our backs on him. His love remains even when we’re suffering the consequences of our sins. His faithfulness to his promises is the same today as it was yesterday. In fact nothing voids God’s guaranteed love and forgiveness to you. Of course we can reject that love as the prodigal son did for a while. We can run away from God and do things our own way. But that’s not the path to lasting happiness. Lasting happiness is found in Jesus’ forgiving embrace that covers all of our sins, even our sins of ingratitude. The 17th century English poet, George Herbert, earnestly believed that God’s love endured forever. That’s why he was so puzzled at his own lack of thankfulness towards his Savior and prayed that God would give him a heart that continually beat with thanks and praise. Here’s how he put it:

Thou that hast given so much to me,
Give one thing more, a grateful heart...
Not thankful, when it pleaseth me;
As if thy blessings had spare days:
But such a heart, whose pulse may be
Thy praise.

Yes, give us all such a heart, O Lord. A heart that thanks you loudly, joyfully, and continually as we look forward to the day when our thankful voices will blend with the angelic praises of heaven. Amen.