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Giving Thanks to God

We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

II Thessalonians 2:13-17

He Loved Us, and Sent His Son

Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. (I Peter 4:5-8)

Peter and all of the Scriptures warn us of the end times and the coming of Judgment. When Jesus ascended to Heaven, the angels said He would come again in like manner. This time, He will come with great power and glory to judge the quick and the dead. Everyone will have to give an account of his faith that day. Those who are walking in living faith will be welcomed to Heaven, but those who are not in faith will be rejected.

In verse 6, Peter gives the purpose for the preaching of the Gospel. *For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.*

In Paul's letter to the Romans, he tells how and who will preach this Gospel. *Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:13-15, 17)

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not. (II Corinthians 4:1)

Again to the Corinthians, Paul wrote, *Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. (II Corinthians 3:6)* The message that goes forth is that we preach Jesus crucified and resurrected from the dead. Any other message is not of God, but of the flesh. Jesus is the only one who has paid our sin debt. Jesus is the only one who has risen from the dead for us. He is the one who has sent his Spirit to live in our hearts. Works alone cannot save us. Jesus will come again, and his Word shall judge the quick and the dead.

As God's children and servants, we are to warn others as our text tells us, *The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.* We cannot afford to slumber and sleep as the virgins were doing when the Bridegroom came. It was too late for the ones without oil

in their lamps.

When Jesus prayed in the garden, He told his disciples to *Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. (Mark 13:33)* These are words of sound warning to us today.

The final verse tells us to love one another even as Jesus has loved us. *Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*

Apostle John wrote of true, brotherly love and of hypocritical love. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.*

He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. (I John 2:9-11)

Also from John: *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. (I John 3:14-15)*

John describes true love as well. *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.*

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. (I John 4:7-11)

**"If God so loved us,
we ought also to
love one another."**

May this love bind us together so that the name of Jesus will be glorified by our brotherly love.

*God's peace,
Pastor and Mrs. Don Salo
New York Mills, Minnesota*

Jesus said, *If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.*

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

John 12:47-48

Thankfulness

As we approach this Thanksgiving season, the news of the world is very disquieting. We should not be too surprised at this because God's Word warned us that it would be this way in the last days. How, then, can we live in these times without being overcome by fear and anxiety? *Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. (Colossians 3:15)*

It is much easier to be thankful in times of ease than when circumstances are difficult in our lives, our nation, and in other adverse situations. What does God's Word have to say in this regard? *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (Colossians 3:1-2)*

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, should be our most precious treasure. He is the Lord who purchased our redemption with his own blood. *God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)*

No matter what our earthly circumstances are, Jesus told us that He will never leave us or forsake us if we desire Him to be the Lord of our life, and if we believe in his merits as the author and finisher of our faith. We have God's peace in our hearts when we believe the wonderful Gospel message of the forgiveness of our sins.

Apostle Paul left us clear instruction on how to maintain such a peace. *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. (Philippians 4:8-9)

May God grant and inspire us to walk in his way, and to tell others of this marvelous love which is manifested toward us.

*In God's peace,
Allan Wirkkala
Kelso, Washington*

Heartfelt Thanks and Joyful Worship

In the book of Psalms, David wrote from his heart. Open and honest, he stood before God, making his petitions known and offering heartfelt thanks. We can believe that it was thankfulness that prompted him to say, *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. (Psalm 122:1)*

As David expressed joy for the opportunity to enter the Lord's house, I could not help but consider his words in my own heart. Too often I find that the joy David experienced when he was invited to join others in entering the Lord's house is suppressed in me by concerns and cares of this natural life, many of which I have no control over.

It is at such times that I need to be reminded by the study and hearing of God's Word that I am in the care and keeping of the one who has promised to lead me through life's brief sojourn. He has invited me to cast all my cares upon Him. He knows our troubles, our concerns, and our cares. It is in this reminding, then, that I am so often ashamed to think that I was easily overtaken and burdened by that which my Good Shepherd so easily dispels.

How is it with you, dear fellow traveler? Are you always glad at the prospect of entering the Lord's house?

We pray for strength today that our Heavenly Father will reveal to our hearts what a privilege He has given us to enter his house. If we, with eyes of faith, could recognize what a blessing we are given in this, our hearts would unceasingly offer prayers of thanks to Him. How many people in this world yearn for such an opportunity to worship our Creator in his house of worship, but cannot for one reason or another? Though the desire is there, the opportunity is not. Do we have reason to be both glad and thankful? With one accord, I believe we would have to answer with a resounding Yes.

The writer to the Hebrews reminds us not to forsake the *assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. (Hebrews 10:25)* Why not? Because, he counsels, we see the day approaching of which the Scriptures teach. Spiritual darkness is looming before us. *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. (Matthew 24:12)*

Dear friend, let us not treat these warnings with indifference or disregard, but pray earnestly that our Lord will instill in us a hunger and a thirst for his Word. Let us demonstrate our sincerity by prioritizing our remaining time on earth, setting apart time to regularly attend worship services and Bible studies, eagerly hearing and learning more and more of his wonderful love.

Thanks be to God that we can still enter his Christian Church on earth, where the living Word is proclaimed. In his house, the precious blood of Jesus speaks grace and forgiveness, love, faith, and hope. All of these blessings prompt our hearts to joyfully express our gladness and thankfulness to God for the opportunity to worship Him here on earth. And one day, with joy unspeakable, we will enter our eternal home.

Pastor Ken Storm
Tapiola, Michigan

Goodness and Mercy

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. (Psalm 23:6)

How could David be so confident in his salvation? Was it because he felt he could save himself, or that by his own righteousness he could be worthy? No, David, through the eyes of faith, could see his salvation in all that Christ Jesus would provide for him. *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ((Psalm 23:1)*

First, Christ Jesus would fulfil all righteousness for him. Then He would pay the full price for his sins, die on the cross, and descend into hell. The most assuring of all is when he could see Him risen, victorious over death, hell, and the power of the Devil.

Jesus Christ lives forevermore as a mediator between God and man, making intercession for him. To the Father He says that He has purchased him *with his own blood (Acts 20:28)*, and has sent down his love to dwell within him. *The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (Romans 5:5)* Therefore, Christ says, He is mine. *I will come again, and receive you unto myself. (John 14:3)*

Surely David's confidence was in the sheer grace, mercy, and forgiveness of Christ, and not in himself. *This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)*

You, also, can have the confidence of David, and be sure of your salvation. May the revelation of Jesus Christ be ever with you.

*Pastor Mark Aho
Ashburnham, Massachusetts*

Ye are the Light of the World

I don't know about you, but sometimes I spend way too much time thinking about the future; what I might do next year or some distant year when everything settles down. I think, Maybe then I will have more time to do something that really makes a difference. Maybe then I will have more time to do the Lord's work.

Sometimes we need to slow down, be less anxious, relax, and pray, *If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. (James 4:15)* We have no guarantee of next year, or next month, or tomorrow. Jesus didn't say, "You will be," but rather *Ye are the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14)*

If our hearts are open to receive the rays of the Son of righteousness, we should not be anxious about doing our part. We should not be burdened, or in bondage to doing good, but know that the Light of the world will shine through us. We don't need to crank a tiresome generator or get "charged" to keep our lights burning. Our lights are not as plastic flashlights powered by dying Duracell or Ever-Ready batteries, but rather by an eternally ready Light. Jesus said, *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. (John 9:5)*

I recall an incident years ago while I was working as a land surveyor. The guys I worked with were not God-fearing to say the least. I enjoyed the work, but not the scene. One afternoon, as my superiors stood by while I was vigorously sledge hammering a hub, one of my swings missed the target, and I crushed the dirt. I instantly muttered something under my breath. I vividly remember their cynical comment, "You must be religious or something; I've never heard you swear." I was stunned. In my estimation, my language was nowhere near perfect. In fact, I was sure that I had sworn in their presence, and had made a conscious effort to "fit in." And now he was telling me I was different. *My light? -- filthy rags. Jesus' light? -- perfection!* His light that day not only shone through me to my co-workers, but into my own darkness. It gave me strength to guard my tongue in their presence from that day forward.

At times we can feel disappointed or discouraged when others won't put more energy toward a cause, mission, or ministry we feel strongly about. Sometimes we can unknowingly be trying to create our own light by pulling ahead of Christ under a self-loaded burden or yoke. When we are yoked together with Him, He says, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30)

Or, at times we may cautiously avoid doing good works if we feel uncomfortable receiving compliments, if we struggle with proud thoughts, or if we fear that it may appear to others as "works righteousness." That is the Devil speaking. Let us say, "Get behind me, Satan! You're not going to stifle the Lord's work!"

Jesus said, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)* Don't put your hand over the lens. *Quench not the Spirit. (I Thessalonians 5:19)* Don't put your candle under a basket.

He is the vine, and if we are in life's God-given role, though it may seem dimly insignificant, if we are abiding in Him and He in us, we are the branches that *will* bear fruit. We are bearing the light. *Freely ye have received, freely give. (Matthew 10:8)* Freely do his good works, and his beams will shine lovely to the souls of men.

*Roger Christopher
Yacolt, Washington*

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

John 15:5

Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God

The Prophet Isaiah encourages us with these words: *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (Isaiah 55:6-7)*

One must take these words to heart, for they are meant to lead sinners to that throne of grace and altar of mercy where they will hear the voice of the reconciling Gospel that our sins are truly forgiven in the name and blood of Christ. There, those sins will be cast into the sea of grace, which is so vast it cannot be crossed, nor can its depth be measured.

The psalmist, David, tells us, *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. (Psalm 32:1-2)*

When we begin to walk by faith, believing on the merits of Christ, God does not impute sin unto us. He sees us as pure and holy, for we walk and dwell in the righteousness of Christ. We must lay aside all our own works of the flesh, and believe and trust in his grace.

Now how do we find this kingdom of God? We must look here upon earth, for Christ did not take the kingdom to Heaven. He left the keys to the kingdom here with his own children. Isaiah said, *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.* Jesus is among his own in Spirit and in truth. He told us plainly, *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:20)*

You will not find Jesus anywhere else but here on earth among his own. He has left the binding and loosing keys with his Church. Those keys are the authority to bind the unrepentant to their sins, and to loosen the penitent from theirs.

When Jesus appeared to the disciples who were behind locked doors for fear of the Jews, He stood in the midst of them and said, *Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. (John 20:21-23)*

Jesus has commissioned his disciples or followers to preach the forgiveness of sins to those who are truly sorrowful over their sinful condition. We must remember we are sinners, *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)* And to those who do not want or need to repent, their sins are retained unto them. They cannot see the kingdom of God, for it is a spiritual kingdom. As Jesus told the Pharisees, *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. (Luke 17:20-21)*

"The kingdom of God is within you."

Luther states that the Golden Age has arrived when God has adequately instructed every man so that he is able to say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

We are to look here on earth for the forgiveness of sins. We must hear the Gospel message, for it is written, *Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. (Isaiah 55:3)*

So, as our text says, *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.* The Lord Jesus Christ lives in the hearts of every true believing child of God. Each one is a member of the royal priesthood that Peter wrote about: *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (I Peter 2:9)* Each Christian has the commission and authority to proclaim to you to believe all your sins, faults, and failures forgiven in Jesus' name and shed, atoning blood. And you can grasp hold of this Gospel by faith. As it is written, *The just shall live by faith. (Galatians 3:11)* Go seek the Lord Jesus in the midst of his children, for there is where you shall find Him.

I'd like to make one more reference to where Christ is found. John wrote in what is known as the high priestly prayer, *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. (John 17:23)* In Jesus' own words, He tells us where He is to be found.

May God grant his grace to those who are still in the world of darkness so that the light of the Gospel will shine into their hearts. And let us, who are the blood-bought children of God, offer prayers unto the Heavenly Father, asking Him to call all to repentance. Let us always pray for our fellow men and our loved ones.

Let us pray especially for those who preach the Word, so that God will give them courage and understanding to bring forth the Word of reconciliation to penitent sinners. May they leave their burdens of sin at the foot of the cross and look to the resurrection morning.

All glory and honor to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

*Terrence Lantto
Stanley, North Dakota*

A Sermon of Thanks and Praise

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for this day of grace. We thank thee that Thou hast granted yet another year together to honor thee with thanks and praise.

We thank thee for this food that is set before us, which Thou hast so graciously provided, and for the comfort of this home. May we share it with love and peace and harmony, remembering thy goodness in these thy gifts that Thou hast so richly blessed unto us. Above all, we thank thee for thy Son, Jesus our Lord, who suffered and died on the cross that we may be saved.

Help us to see ourselves as sinners before thee as we come to thee in all humbleness and humility. Look not upon our iniquities, but deliver us from all sin and the power of Satan.

And, as the end of time is drawing near -- and all signs are evident that the end of all things created is close at hand according to thy Holy Word -- may we be found ready to stand before thy throne guiltless, spotless, clean, and pure in thy sight, to inherit all the riches of Heaven for thy name's sake.

Praise and glory be to thy holy name. Amen.

*Submitted by Gerald Kantola in memory of mother,
Martha Kantola of Bovey, MN, author of this prayer,
who passed away on September 18, 2005*

Children's Page

Dear children all over the globe,

Do you remember where our story left off last time? Elijah was by the brook where the water had dried up. What was he to do? Let's look into our chapter again: 1 Kings 17:8-24.

One Little Cake and Abundant Grace

We left Elijah sitting by the brook, Cherith, and the water had all dried up and he could not stay there. *And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. (Verses 8-9)*

Elijah did just as God told him. As he reached the gate of the city, he saw a woman outside the gates, gathering sticks. Elijah was very thirsty, so he called out to her and asked her for a drink of water.

The woman was a total stranger, and yet she felt Elijah's need and went to get him water. As she was leaving, Elijah made another request of her: that she bring him a piece of bread.

The woman had water to share, but bread, too? She said to Elijah, *As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. (Verse 12)*

As I read this, I feel so sad for that woman. She and her son were so hungry that she was sure they would soon die. You can understand why she didn't feel that she could feed an extra mouth. But could she?

Elijah told her not to fear, but to go and do as he asked, adding, *but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. (Verse 13)* I can only imagine this woman standing there speechless, thinking that she couldn't believe what she was hearing; that the man was asking the impossible of her.

Elijah comforted her fears by saying, *For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. (Verse 14)*

This woman trusted these words. She went and did that which he asked, and it was just as God promised through Elijah. The meal and oil did not run out, and the three of them ate for many days. How happy the woman must have been to have food enough so that they did not die. Things went well for some time, but then a new trouble came upon them.

The woman's son became so sick that he had no breath left in him. After almost having to die from lack of food, the woman could not believe that after having plenty to eat, her son would die.

The woman mourned for her child, and holding him close, *she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come*

unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? (Verse 18)

Elijah could not bear to see the woman's sorrow, and knew he needed God's help. And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.

And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. (Verses 19-22) I feel as though I can rejoice with Elijah. O, the joy that flooded his heart, and how thankful he was. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.

And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth. (Verses 23-24)

This story ends very happily, and we can imagine the gladness in this mother's heart. But the best part was that she believed at the end of this episode. She trusted Elijah as a man of God by the word of the Lord that he spoke, and by the things that happened according to it.

God speaks, and He means what He says, and all in love. He never fails to do what He says.

He hears our cries, too. Ask God to help you with your troubles. He will hear. What a great God we have.

This has been a wonderful story, with sadness and joy happening over and over, and then ending well.

Remember, Elijah was still hiding from King Ahab, and would not be going home until the rains returned. We will look into that another time.

*Praying that God will watch over you every day,
God's peace,
Gwen Wilson*

Grace

We thank thee, Lord, for this our food;
For life, and health, and every good:
By thine own hand may we be fed;
Give us each day our daily bread.

Edwin Gilbert

Thanksgiving Services

The Castle Rock and Clatskanie congregations will host Thanksgiving services November 18th, 19th, and 20th, 2005. Please note the change in the date. This is the weekend before Thanksgiving Day. Phil Wilson of Hockinson, Washington will be the guest speaker.

Services will be held at the Trinity Lutheran Church, 2021 Washington Way, Longview, Washington on Friday and Saturday evenings at 7:00 pm. Please note this change in location for the Sunday services: they will be held at the Rainier High School in Rainier, Oregon at 11:00 am and 3:00 pm with a meal in between.

May each of us have a prayerful heart that these services will be to God's glory and to the edification of our souls.

*Joel Kandoll, Secretary
Castle Rock Congregation*

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

Psalm 100:4

He Led Me by His Grace

Dear friends in the living faith of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Grace be unto you all, and peace from God our Father and our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. I am taking this opportunity through the *Christian Monthly* to write a few words of greetings, and also to thank the brothers and sisters for the true Christian testimonies that they have sent in to be published.

We are living in a dark and sinful world where there is no true peace, but only restlessness and many false doctrines that lead undying souls astray from the true peace. We really need messengers of God's love and peace to admonish, exhort, and encourage us Christians to continue walking in the footsteps of Jesus, our Saviour. He humbled himself and came to this sinful earth, became flesh to dwell among men, and to set up his kingdom of grace on earth, where sinners can come and be reconciled to God.

Oh, brothers and sisters, let us rejoice that Jesus Christ arose from the grave. So, also, He will arise in our hearts when we come to his kingdom of grace and repent of our sins and shortcomings. There we can hear the Gospel preached to us through the mouths of his disciples, the Christians who have received the Holy Spirit by faith. This is where the cleansing fountain is today; where we can have our sins washed away in the blood of the Lamb.

But, in our time, there are few people who can answer as Simon Peter did to Jesus: *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:16-19)

We must be born again. We cannot see the kingdom of God, as Jesus told Nicodemus, who was a teacher of the Jews. As long as we strive for salvation by our own strength or reason, we are in a dead faith that leads to damnation of the soul. We cannot build a bridge to Heaven that consists of manmade ideas or is not

supported by the Scriptures or by the teachings of Jesus and his disciples. Apostle Paul said, *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (I Corinthians 2:14)*

I can testify to the truth of this. I was in dead faith and unbelief, even though I tried to live a pious life and not take part in outwardly sinful things. I also thought that, when the Christians spoke the Word of God, they only judged. I did not understand that the Word of God is like a two-edged sword. It pierces the heart, and that naturally hurts.

But thanks be to God, for He led me to his kingdom where his saints are assembled. There I received the forgiveness of my sin and shame through the preaching of the Gospel, which is the living Word.

Apostle John wrote that the Word is God. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)* Let us always look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. *(Hebrews 12:2)* He cares for us.

Also, dear friends who are outside of God's kingdom, and who long for peace and forgiveness of sins, come to the kingdom and be blessed in the time of grace. Jesus said, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)*

Lena Nelson

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God.

II Thessalonians 1:3-5

Let Us Give Thanks

Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! (Psalm 107:8)

The day of thanks dawns again upon this good land. In this year, we have enjoyed the providential care of the Lord. By the example of the Pilgrim fathers, as a nation, we are inspired to pause amid our blessings and give thanks to our Creator. Among the nations of the earth, this is a unique privilege that we Americans have shared for scores of years.

As we reflect upon our nation's origin and its history, we are constrained to renewed appreciation for the efforts and the sacrifices of those who contributed to the formation and the preservation of this union that we call the United States of America.

The pilgrims set out to cross the mighty ocean in vessels hardly worthy of such an undertaking. Yet God led them to the shores of this continent, and they established a colony intended to be the realization of the long-held dream of freedom. Those who survived the hardships of the long sea voyage and the rigors of a harsh New England winter still speak to us of the value of freedom. Later, in eloquence all his own, the fiery orator, Patrick Henry, expressed his deep emotions by saying, "give me liberty or give me death."

After the Revolutionary War, the statesmen, our founding fathers, produced a Constitution that united the colonies as one nation, and gave it the necessary strength and cohesion to endure many tests. Even civil war did not destroy this union.

We can be thankful for leaders of such character and determination of purpose whom God gave this nation. Today we also pray for our President, George W. Bush, and enlist the aid of the Almighty in his leadership of our nation in these troubled times.

As Christians, we are concerned citizens of our country. There is much evidence of disobedience among our people. There is not only lawlessness as it concerns civil authority, but also a widening rejection of divine authority itself. Satan does not want the people to be reminded that *Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people. (Proverb 14:34)*

The downfall of many great nations and powerful empires has stemmed from internal decay. When God's laws are rejected and replaced with license to indulge in every conceivable sinful lust and practice, a nation has passed its point of strength and greatness, and is on the road to a decline that, unless reversed, will result in

the destruction of that people and their way of life.

But, let us remember: our God reigns! He hears and answers prayer. When King Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, God answered by fire that came down from Heaven and consumed the offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house. The Lord said to Solomon, *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. (II Chronicles 7:14)*

Let this word be heard in our homes, in our churches, and in the halls of our government this Thanksgiving.

*Pastor Alvin Holmgren
Seattle, Washington*

Invitation to the 2006 Convention

The Apostolic Lutheran Church of Hockinson, Washington wishes to invite everyone to the 2006 Annual Convention. It will be held at Skyview High School north of Vancouver on July 13-16, 2006. Further information will be forthcoming in this publication.

*In God's peace,
John Isaacson,
Convention Chairman*

I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.

Psalm 35:18

The Sacrifice of Praise

For the beauty of the earth,
For the glory of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies;
Father, unto thee we raise
This, our sacrifice of praise.

For the beauty of each hour,
Of the day and of the night,
Hill, and vale, and tree, and flower,
Sun and moon, and stars of light;
Father, unto thee we raise
This, our sacrifice of praise.

For the joy of ear and eye,
For the heart and mind's delight,
For the mystic harmony
Linking sense to sound and sight;
Father, unto thee we raise
This, our sacrifice of praise.

For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth, and friends above,
Pleasures pure and undefiled;
Father, unto thee we raise
This, our sacrifice of praise.

For thy Son, best gift divine,
To our race so freely given;
For that great, great love of thine,
Peace on earth and joy in Heaven;
Father, unto thee we raise
This, our sacrifice of praise.

Folliott Sandford Pierpoint
1835-1917