**National Day of Thanksgiving,**

28 November 2019

*Concordia Lutheran Mission*

Terrebonne, Oregon.

**“Christians Give Thanks for the Gospel**

**on This National Day of Thanksgiving.”**

And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

**St. Luke 17:14**.

**Introduction**.

On this National Day of Thanksgiving we give thanks for the Gospel because all spiritual and material blessings flow from the Gospel.[[1]](#footnote-1)1 This fact is evidenced in today’s Gospel wherein the spiritual Office of Priest and faith made this Samaritan leper whole.

In the first place, the only reason the world keeps on turning is because of the Gospel.[[2]](#footnote-2)2 The only reason we continue to enjoy seed time and harvest is for the sake of the Preaching of the Gospel. Were it not for the Work of the Preaching of the Gospel, the world long ago have stopped turning.

Finally, we are thankful for the Gospel because it forgives sin, saves, gives life eternal, and the resurrection of the body on the Last Day when Christ returns again in glory. That’s why under the Law of Moses lepers were sent to the priests and not the physicians. *The Lord wanted to use the disease of leprosy to show that the Gospel truly delivers from sin because it gives the resurrection of the body, vividly manifested to the people of Israel and to us today by the healing of leprosy through the Spiritual Office of Priest, namely, the Office of the Gospel*.

We give thanks for the Gospel on this National Day of Thanksgiving because the spiritual governs the material and will raise it up on the Last Day when Christ returns again glory.

**I. The Cross of Christ Keeps the World Turning.**

**A. Sin causes the world to stop and all life with it.**

If the Gospel keeps the world turning, what causes it to stop? Sin causes the world to stop. Moses writes:

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return. [[3]](#footnote-3)3

Returned to the ground, dust and ashes. That pretty much brings the world and life to halt for Adam and all his descendants, all of us. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned ... .[[4]](#footnote-4)4

**B. The Cross of Christ keeps the world turning and life with it**.

What keeps the world turning after the fall into sin? *The Cross of Christ keeps the world turning after sin*. Moses writes:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; [He, i.e., Christ] it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.[[5]](#footnote-5)5

By the Suffering and Death of Christ, that is to say, the Bruising His Heel, Christ would crush the head of the devil and his works and his ways, namely, sin and death. The Apostle St. John writes of the work of the devil:

Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.[[6]](#footnote-6)6

The Apostle St. John writes that Christ came to destroy the works of the devil:

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.[[7]](#footnote-7)7

Luther writes of this passage from Moses:

Thus the sun of comfort, previously enveloped by black clouds, rises above the clouds and with its most welcome light shines on their frightened hearts. For Adam and Eve not only do not hear themselves cursed like the serpent; but they even hear themselves drawn up, as it were, in battle line against their condemned enemy, and this with the hope of help from the Son of God, the Seed of the woman. Forgiveness of sins and full reception into grace are here pointed out to Adam and Eve. Their guilt has been forgiven; they have been won back from death and have already been set free from hell and from those fears by which they were all but slain when God appeared.[[8]](#footnote-8)8

Likewise, the Apostle St. Paul writes that the wages of sin is death but the Gift of Christ is life everlasting:

For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.[[9]](#footnote-9)9

With the Blessing of the forgiveness of sins comes also the resurrection of the body. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection ... .1[[10]](#footnote-10)0

In the Cross of Christ God is now reconciled to the world. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.1[[11]](#footnote-11)1

Because God is reconciled to the world in the Cross of Christ, the world keeps on turning. Seedtime and harvest continue only because of the Cross of Christ, which reconciles God to a sinful and fallen world. *The Cross of Christ alone is the Source of the Cornucopia of Blessings we enjoy in this life*. The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes:

Scripture constantly reminds us that our deliverance from the guilt of sin through the one sacrifice of Christ must be kept in the foreground. It is the cause and fountainhead of all other blessings. Because our guilt is wiped out before God, therefore we are also redeemed from death, etc.1[[12]](#footnote-12)2

**II. The Gospel Raises Up from Death and Gives Everlasting Spiritual and Material Blessings.**

**A. God saves through the Gospel**.

But to what end does God keep the world turning? *The world keeps turning that the Cornucopia of Blessings of Christ Passion be distributed through the Gospel*. Through the Gospel comes the Blessings of Christ’s Passion. The Apostle St. Matthew writes:

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.1[[13]](#footnote-13)3

The Lutheran Church confesses Christ distributes the Blessings of His Passion to men through the Gospel:

That such merits and benefits of Christ shall be presented, offered, and distributed to us through His Word and Sacraments.1[[14]](#footnote-14)4

Through the Gospel, namely, God’s Word and Sacraments, God saves men from sin. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.1[[15]](#footnote-15)5

For the salvation of men through the Gospel, God keeps the world turning and we enjoy seedtime and harvest. The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes:

Holy Scripture is very explicit in teaching that the present world exists, by virtue of God’s express will and providence, for the sole purpose that the Gospel of Christ, the message of God’s gracious forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ’s vicarious satisfaction, may be proclaimed in it. In Matt. 24, 14 Christ tells us this very clearly and emphatically; He engraves it, as it were, upon brass and granite by declaring: “This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come,” namely, the end of the world. God has indeed purchased mankind at a great cost. With the blood of Jesus Christ, His incarnate Son, He has paid the price for sinful man’s eternal salvation, and now He permits the world to stand in order that in it the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ may be proclaimed and that this Gospel-message may be accepted by men through faith.1[[16]](#footnote-16)6

**B. The Gospel Blesses Men with the salvation, life everlasting, and the resurrection of the body.**

Because the Gospel forgives sins, from it issues salvation. The Apostle St. Peter writes:

The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience1[[17]](#footnote-17)7 toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ ... .1[[18]](#footnote-18)8

Where sin is forgiven, there is life everlasting. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.1[[19]](#footnote-19)9

With the forgiveness of sins also comes the resurrection of the body. After all, sin undoes the body; the remission of sin restores the body. For this reason, to demonstrate the Power of the Gospel to restore the body and raise from the dead, lepers under the Law of Moses were sent to the priest, which Jesus did in today’s Gospel. Normally, one would send a leper to the physician, but in order to demonstrate to the people of Israel and to us the power of the Gospel to raise from the dead the Lord sent lepers to the priest. *The Lord treated this disease Sacramentally to show the Power of the Gospel to forgive sin, save, and to raise from death.*2[[20]](#footnote-20)0 This Blessed Truth is shown again in today’s Gospel when Jesus attributes the leper’s cure to faith, which alone is a creation of the Saving Gospel2[[21]](#footnote-21)1. The Evangelist St. Luke writes:

And he [Jesus] said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.2[[22]](#footnote-22)2

*In this especially materialistic age of ours it is important to remember that the physical does not govern the spiritual but rather the spiritual governs the material, as we see in the leper being healed not by the physician but by the Gospel*. The Lutheran Church confesses:

... the Sacrament [is] a pure, wholesome, comforting remedy imparting salvation and comfort, which will cure you and give you life both in soul and body. For where the soul has recovered, the body also is relieved.2[[23]](#footnote-23)3

**Conclusion**.

On this National Day of Thanksgiving we give thanks for the Gospel. *The Cornucopia of all Blessings is the Gospel*. For the world only continues to turn for the sake of the Gospel, the Gospel providing us with seedtime and harvest.

Finally, the Gospel gives to men life everlasting and the resurrection of the body as seen with the healing of the leper by the Gospel through faith. By the Gospel through faith God will raise our bodies from the dead to enjoy the endless Cornucopias of Blessing of His Glorious and Everlasting Kingdom.

**Amen**

1. 1“Scripture constantly reminds us that our deliverance from the guilt of sin through the one sacrifice of Christ must be kept in the foreground. It is the cause and fountainhead of all other blessings. Because our guilt is wiped out before God, therefore we are also redeemed from death, etc.” Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, Vol. II, p. 344, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2“Holy Scripture is very explicit in teaching that the present world exists, by virtue of God’s express will and providence, for the sole purpose that the Gospel of Christ, the message of God’s gracious forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ’s vicarious satisfaction, may be proclaimed in it. In Matt. 24, 14 Christ tells us this very clearly and emphatically; He engraves it, as it were, upon brass and granite by declaring: ‘This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come,’ namely, the end of the world. God has indeed purchased mankind at a great cost. With the blood of Jesus Christ, His incarnate Son, He has paid the price for sinful man’s eternal salvation, and now He permits the world to stand in order that in it the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ may be proclaimed and that this Gospel-message may be accepted by men through faith.” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, **The Christian World View**, *What is Christianity?*, Malone, TX: Repristination Press, reprinted 1997, Third Printing, August 1999 pp. 31, 32.

   “The world owes its continued existence to the unfinished task of the church in spreading that Word (Matt. 24:14).” The Rev. Dr. Eugene F. A. Klug, *Church and Ministry*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999, p. 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3**Genesis 3:17-19**. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4**Romans 5:12**. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 5**Genesis 3:15**, translation from the Hebrew and amplification in brackets added. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 6**St. John 8:44**. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 7**I John 3:8**. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 8*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 1, p. 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 9**Romans 6:23**. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 10**Romans 6:4-5**. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 11**I Corinthians 5:17**. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 12Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, Vol. II, p. 344, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 13**St. Matthew 26:27-28**. God’s Word and Sacraments are the Gospel. “But let us speak of the word *liturgy*. This word does not properly signify a sacrifice, but rather the public ministry, and agrees aptly with our belief, namely, that one minister who consecrates tenders the body and blood of the Lord to the rest of the people, just as one minister who preaches tenders the Gospel to the people, as Paul says, I Cor. 4, 1: *Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, i.e.* of the Gospel and the Sacraments. And 2 Cor. 5, 20: *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in God’s stead, be ye reconciled to God*. Thus the term *leitourgia* agrees aptly with the ministry.” The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*,* **Article XXIV. (XII.): Of the Mass**, *Of the Term Mass*.80, 81, *Triglotta*, p. 411. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. 14*The Formula of Concord*, **Article XI**. **Of God’s Eternal Election.**16, *Triglotta*, p. 1069. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 15**Ephesians 2:8-10**. The Grace referred to here is God’s Word and Sacraments, i.e., “For by Word and Sacrament are ye saved through faith”, because God’s Grace is His Word and Sacraments. “To be saved by the Word and the Sacraments means, according to Scripture, to be saved by grace for Christ’s sake, without works.” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 16The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, **The Christian World View**, *What is Christianity?*, Malone, TX: Repristination Press, reprinted 1997, Third Printing, August 1999 pp. 31, 32.

    “The world owes its continued existence to the unfinished task of the church in spreading that Word (Matt. 24:14).” The Rev. Dr. Eugene F. A. Klug, *Church and Ministry*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999, p. 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 17“The Greek word for ‘answer’, as is universally accepted, has in forensic language become a technical term for ‘agreement’. Contained in the original meaning of the word was the fact that the signing of an agreement began with the question: ‘Do you solemnly promise?’ This was eventually lost in idiomatic usage so that by this word as legal expression the Greek came to think only of the legal stipulation itself. And this meaning fits admirably in our passage, the only one in which the word is found in the New Testament. Baptism is the stipulation, or, to say with Luther, ‘the covenant of a good conscience’ in relation to or with God. Baptism cleanses the conscience from sin and its guilt, generates a good conscience which looks up to God joyfully and confidently, standing in union and communion with God. On the basis of this passage from Peter we commonly speak of the baptismal covenant. Cremer’s explanation keys in with this: ‘The claim, the title, which a good conscience has to God.’” The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on the First Epistle of St. Peter*, tr. Erwin W. Koehlinger, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, no date, pp. 165, 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 18**I Peter 3:21**. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. 19**Romans 6:23**. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. 20“**V. 19. [Leviticus 14] And the priest shall offer the sin-offering, and make an atonement for him that is to be cleansed from his uncleanness,** for the leprosy was only the outward expression of the inner impurity of sin ... .” The Rev. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Old Testament, The Old Testament*, Vol. I, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, p. 210, amplification in brackets added.

    “The Biblical concepts are once physical or material and spiritual, at once envisioning a sort of force or power as well as the resultant state, referring both to the sacrificing incompleteness (‘original sin’) as well as the ‘actual sin’ resulting from it. Since the underlying problem is simply sin in its deepest dimensions, ... the ‘purification’ must ultimately be related again to the covenant, that is to God’s declaratory verdict of ‘justified.’ In this connection we find that verdict reflected in the ‘declaratory formulae’ of the priests, pronouncing one clean. (A similar usage appears in connection with sacrifice, which the priest declares acceptable to God or meeting with His favor.) Only when sin has been comprehensively removed in the cross of the new covenant will it be possible to lift these cumbersome restrictions (Acts 10, etc.).” The Rev. Dr. Horace Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978, p. 82.

    “[Leviticus] is one continuous sermon on the salvation of Jesus Christ; for, as the New Testament shows conclusively, the entire magnificent system of sacrifices was nothing less than a typical [characteristic] representation of the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which was foreshadowed by every bloody offering on the sacred altars. And as far as the children of Israel were concerned, the laws of sacrifices taught them that God is holy, and that man is sinful; that all are guilty before His Law; that the man who transgresses His Law is worthy of His wrath and displeasure, temporal death, and eternal damnation; that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin; that the holy God desires to enter into fellowship with sinful man, and approaches him, and appoints this way of sacrifices as an atonement for sin, and through His mercy accepts the sacrifice of the victim instead of the death of the sinner. ... The Book of Genesis shows man’s ruin and fall. Exodus pictures the great redemption and salvation which God has provided. Leviticus follows naturally and is mainly occupied with the way of access to God in worship and communion. It is a book for redeemed people.” The Rev. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible, Old Testament,* Vol. I, *The Historical Books of the Old Testament; Genesis to Esther*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1923, p.186, amplification in brackets added. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. 21“Faith is not the product of human deliberation, self-decision, or concurrence, etc., but as much a creative work of God as the calling forth of light out of darkness at Creation (2 Cor. 4:6).” Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, p. 514. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. 22**St. Luke 17:19**. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. 23The Large Catechism, **[Part Fifth]** **Of The Sacrament of the Altar**.68, *Triglotta*, p. 769. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)