



LESSONS:

ISAIAH 25:6-9 OR
WISDOM 3:1-9

PSALM 24:1-10, 22 (9)
REVELATION 21:1-6A
ST. JOHN 11:32-44

BIBLE IN 90 DAYS READING

PSALM 104: 24-34, 35B

PRAYER OF THE DAY

ALMIGHTY GOD, YOU
HAVE KNIT YOUR PEOPLE
TOGETHER IN ONE
COMMUNION IN THE
MYSTICAL BODY OF YOUR
SON, JESUS CHRIST OUR
LORD. GRANT US GRACE TO
FOLLOW YOUR BLESSED
SAINTS IN LIVES OF FAITH
AND COMMITMENT, AND TO
KNOW THE INEXPRESSIBLE
JOYS YOU HAVE PREPARED
FOR HOSE WHO LOVE YOU,
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST,
OUR SAVIOR AND LORD,
WHO LIVES AND REIGNS
WITH YOU AND THE HOLY
SPIRIT, ONE GOD, NOW AND
FOREVER. AMEN.

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Liturgical Day: All Saints Day
Date: November 1, 2009
Sermon Title: An Attitude of Gratitude

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

An Attitude of Gratitude

I have to start my sermon today with a confession. I can't stand the preaching that comes out of Robert Schuler's church. I've read his stuff. I've seen him on TV. I've even been to his church. He puts on a great show, there's no doubt about that. But it seems to me that he is far more focused on denial than resurrection. For instance, sometimes things are just awful. Sometimes no amount of pretending otherwise can change it. No amount of positive thinking can make it different. That's where the resurrection comes in. In those moments when the bottom drops out, we have a God who meets us at the foot of the cross in all of our brokenness; a God who lifts us up despite ourselves; and a God who gives us hope again. When I listen to Shuler's preaching, I don't hear that kind of God-centered resurrection power. But you know, I am so envious of his ability to turn a great phrase. One of them that I remember is that he calls for believers to have an "attitude of gratitude." (That's nice, isn't it? You've got to give it to him.) This morning I want to think about what a "attitude of gratitude" might look like.

There are times when the touch of God in our lives can lead to a remarkable transformation. When we have sinned, God's forgiveness renews us. When we are in the midst of pain, God's presence gives us peace. When we are surrounded by disaster, God's power gives us hope. For that, we are deeply grateful. In the best and in the worst of times, we can live with what brother Schuler calls this "attitude of gratitude." We can be grateful that God loves us enough to die for us. We can be grateful that God understands our pain. We can be grateful that we go forward in life with God's strength, not just our own. In the best of times, and in the worst of times, we can be grateful for God's presence in our lives.

I want to talk about gratitude this morning.

The Psalms: A Source of Gratitude

This past week, the "Bible in 90 Days" group has powered their way through the Psalms – all 150 of them. The Psalter is a book that traces its roots all the way back to King David. Certainly he didn't write the entire collection, but it is believed that at least some of them were composed by him, nearly 1,000 years before Christ was born. So for the past three thousand years, these have been the songs and poems that believers have turned to in worship. These have been the words that have shaped our praise and prayers. So it is a very important collection in the life and history of the church.

As you read through the Psalms, it seems as though half of them talk about how great our God is, and half of them complain about how tough life is. That makes sense, if we think of King David as the author (or at least the inspiration) of these Psalms. There were times when David was faithful and successful, and thankful to God for all that had been entrusted to him. But there were also times when David was broken and fearful and despondent. In all of these times, David called on his God. And in all of these situations, the Psalms are a resource that can help us to do the same. The Psalms draw us into God's presence, entrust our cares and concerns to God's grace, and allow us to be grateful for God's presence in our lives.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

The Psalm we read this morning is the 104th Psalm, and if you have studied Luther's Small

Catechism carefully, you will hear echoes of this Psalm. Luther believed, as did the Psalmist (and as do we), that everything has been created by God, and is given for our nourishment and delight. All the creatures of the earth have been created by God, and all the creatures on the earth are dependent on God. And so the Psalmist sings: the eyes of all creatures look to God, who gives us our food in due season. In the Small Catechism, Luther encourages us to remember this Psalm (and Psalm 145) every time we sit down to eat. As we consider the food on our table, we have reason to be grateful, because God provides enough for us all to be well. And so, first of all, this morning's Psalm is a source for what Robert Schuler calls the "Attitude of Gratitude."

All Saints Day: An Occasion for Gratitude

Secondly, the festival that we celebrate today, All Saints Day, is an occasion for us to be grateful. This festival celebrates those saints who lived in Biblical times, and whose stories we know so well. It also celebrates those saints who have lived throughout the years, and who are remembered by the church as helpful examples of faithful living. But this festival also celebrates those saints who have touched our lives – those who have shared the faith with us, and for who we are deeply grateful.

I think of my ancestors, and how their faith was instrumental in allowing them to remain hopeful and at peace, even in the midst of adversity. My parents were born in the mid-1920s, and grew up during the depression years. I can't imagine how hard that must have been. We've been through some financial challenges in recent months, but our experience pales to what people went through in the 1930s. Through it all, my folks remained people of faith, and learned to depend on God. My father's father, my grandfather, left his family and his home to make a new life in America at the end of the 19th Century. He was an early member of my home church, which is now over 150 years old. He was able to leave everything familiar for a new home, in part because of his faith, and his confidence that God would guide him along the way. The same is true of my mother's family, a generation earlier. I am grateful for my ancestors; and especially for the ways in which their faith was passed on to me.

In each of our lives are those Saints who have served God by sharing the faith with us. Our ancestors, our teachers, our mentors, our friends, our brothers and sisters in faith – many of them have played a significant role in helping us become and remain people of faith. We celebrate them on All Saints Day, and are grateful to them and to God for the role they have played in our lives.

Financial Stewardship: An Expression of Gratitude

So the Psalms are a source of gratitude; All Saints Day is an occasion for our gratitude; and this morning our Stewardship Team will encourage us to make our financial support of Saint Peter an expression of our gratitude.

There are a number of different approaches that churches take when they talk about the financial support they need. Some use guilt, and tell their members that things will fall apart if they are not generous. Some use function, and define both what the church intends to do, and what it needs money to make it happen. Some use duty, and insist that every supporter has a God-given duty to be generous with the church and its ministries. Some use value, and make the case that the ministry of the church is worth something, so those who benefit from it should provide the necessary resources.

Although you will hear strains of each approach from time to time at Saint Peter, the consistent drum-beat of our stewardship messages have to do with gratitude. We believe that God has been so good to us. We have been forgiven and redeemed, even though we don't deserve it. God has given us this world, and everything in it, in order that we might be well. Everything we know: our life, our health, our families, our faith: all of it comes to us as a gift from God. Given, with no strings attached. Given, just to show us how much God loves us. We have so much to be grateful for, and one way that God has provided for us to show our gratitude is to be generous in the way we support the ministry that God is making possible through this congregation.

So when we consider what we will give to Saint Peter, the first question is not how much should we give, or how much do we get out of the church. The first question is: "How grateful are we for what God has done

in our lives?" And we hope that our financial support of ministry is an adequate expression of that gratitude.

An Attitude of Gratitude

Today is a good day to focus on gratitude. We are grateful for a God who has provided everything we need in life. We are grateful for those Saints who have shared the faith with us, and who have helped us to understand what it means to live as children of God. And our gratitude is expressed by the support we give to Christian ministry. As a grateful people, let us give our very best to the God who has done so much for us.

Amen.

David J. Risendal, Pastor (November 1, 2009)

Gospel Lesson; English Text: ⁱ

^{11:32} When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.³⁴ He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see."³⁵ Jesus began to weep.³⁶ So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.³⁹ Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days."⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me.⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me."⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."ⁱⁱ

Gospel Lesson; Greek Text:

^{8:31} ἔλεγεν οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πρὸς τοὺς πεπιστευκότας αὐτῷ Ἰουδαίους ἐὰν ὑμεῖς μείνητε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ, ἀληθῶς μαθηταὶ μου ἔστε ³² καὶ γνώσεσθε τὴν ἀλήθειαν, καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐλευθερώσει ὑμᾶς. ³³ ἀπεκρίθησαν πρὸς αὐτὸν σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ ἔσμεν καὶ οὐδενὶ δεδουλεύκαμεν πώποτε πῶς σὺ λέγεις τι ἐλεύθεροι γενήσεσθε; ³⁴ ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν τι πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἀμαρτίαν δούλος ἐστὶν τῆς ἀμαρτίας. ³⁵ ὁ δὲ δούλος οὐ μένει ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ὁ υἱὸς μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. ³⁶ ἐὰν οὖν ὁ υἱὸς ὑμᾶς ἐλευθερώσῃ, ὄντως ἐλεύθεροι σέσθε. ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ A list of Bible lessons for the coming weeks is available at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Worship/Lectionary.aspx>

ⁱⁱ St. John 11:32-44, New Revised Standard Version Bible (© 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America).

ⁱⁱⁱ St. John 11:32-44, The Greek New Testament, Aland, Kurt, Black, Matthew, Martini, Carlo M., Metzger, Bruce M., and Wikgren, Allen, (© 1983, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart).

"The Bible in 90 Days" Lesson:

^{104:24} O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. ²⁵ Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. ²⁶ There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it. ²⁷ These all look to you to give them their food in due season; ²⁸ when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. ²⁹ When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. ³⁰ When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground. ³¹ May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works- ³² who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke. ³³ I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. ³⁴ May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord. ^{35b} Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord! ^{iv}

**Scheduled Readings for
"The Bible in 90 Days"
9/13/2009 - 12/12/2009**

Date	Begin Reading At	Sermon Based On
9/13	Genesis 1:1	Genesis 1:1-19
9/20	Leviticus 1:1	Exodus 16:2-15
9/27	Deuteronomy 23:12	Deuteronomy 6:1-9
10/4	1 Samuel 28:20	Joshua 24:1-3, 14-18
10/11	1 Chronicles 1:1	1 Kings 3:5-12
10/18	Nehemiah 13:15	Nehemiah 1:4-11a
10/25	Psalms 89:14	Job 38:1-11
11/1	Isaiah 14:1	Psalms 104:24-34, 35b
11/8	Jeremiah 33:23	Isaiah 25:6-9
11/15	Daniel 9:1	Ezekiel 2:1-5
11/22	Matthew 26:57	Micah 6:1-8
11/29	Acts 6:8	John 20:19-31
12/6	Hebrews 1:1	Romans 5:1-11

^{iv} Psalm 104:24-34, 35b, New Revised Version Bible (© 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America).