Sermon- Thanksgiving 2020

Text Phil. 4:6-20

Title: “God’s Provision”

Prayer

Salutation

**Bridge**

 **Although the year 2020 has been one *not* to remember, we should bring to mind the year 1620. That year, the Mayflower, a ship of 102 passengers and 20 crew, left England to begin life in a new land. They fled due to religious persecution and tyranny. My wife’s family was on that ship and it’s why I wrote four books about them. They say that as many as 30 million Americans are descendants of this group. Of those 102 people, 45 died the first winter, which was almost immediately after they arrived. There was no time to bring in crops from the harvest for they left too late in the year. They suffered from the trip itself, hunger, cold, and disease. Like Paul, they relied on their faith which brought them there and on the gifts of others. That is why we celebrate this day, Thanksgiving Day, in America. For in a time of great need, God’s Provision was supplied.**

**Law**

 **The Pilgrims made many mistakes. They were to have unknown needs. Needs they never envisioned when they left their homeland. Most certainly, the need for shelter before winter was met for many, but not for all. They had few provisions on board and they ran out soon, for the trip from England to America had taken longer than expected. They learned how to share what they had, tried to fish and forage for themselves and were helped by the Wampanoag natives, but only in varying degrees that first year. They were Puritans. Devout Christians who knew how to pray and live their faith. They prayed and read the Word that first year and more than likely, the Epistle text rang out loudly when they read Paul’s words while he was in prison, “do not be anxious about anything, but in prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.”**

 **By mid-winter that must have been a very difficult thing to do. People were dying. Prayers were, at least in their eyes, not being met. Their faith was being stretched to the limits. But, then there is verse eleven, “Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.” “Be content?” they must have shouted. How could they be content when so many were dying?**

 **These circumstances make the year 2020 seem like a walk in the park. Yes, we are being tested by circumstances beyond our control with Covid-19, death, unemployment, shortages, social unrest and division, and much more. Our faith is, indeed, being tested. And in it all, we, like the Pilgrims, have made many mistakes. The biggest one however, is much different than them, for ours is a lack of trust in the provision of God. Many times, as a nation we forget to thank God, showing how we rely on ourselves instead of He who provides. In that respect, the Pilgrims put us to shame. We look to other avenues to help us out of our misery. The government and other institutions seem to be the places we go for relief. And we leave God out of it. The Pilgrims didn’t have that option. They didn’t have anything or anyone. But they had- God!**

**Gospel**

 **These Pilgrims were much like us. They believed that Christ was the Son of God. Born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, suffered death on the cross for all men, and rose again to life everlasting. They struggled just like us and sinned but remained faithful until the end. They faithfully believed in the promises of God.**

**And God hears the prayers of the faithful. For the faithful thank God. Every time we say the Lord’s prayer, we thank Him, and we show our faith in His continuing provision. We begin by saying, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name.” We believe that we are
His children and as His children proclaim, that He is our Holy God. Then there are six more petitions to our Father. In the context of this day, it would seem that the fourth petition fits the need of the Pilgrims the most. They prayed, “Give us this day our daily bread.”**

 **What does this mean? I’m hoping the confirmation class has that in their heads by now. They know that God certainly gives Daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with Thanksgiving. And what is this daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing ,shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.**

 **Does He give us all of those things at once? Not necessarily. Is life perfect every day? No, but God uses means and people to answer our prayers every day. The Pilgrims found that out. Their prayers were answered when the weather became better and they could fish again. As the land was different, the natives, their “faithful neighbors”, showed them what and how to plant. They showed them how to harvest the bounty of the sea and hunt the local animals. And after the first-year things began to get better. By the third year, these natives, were their friends. And that is when they sat down together and gave Thanks. God had provided all their needs and His provision was proclaimed-good.**

 **Today, we have been blessed beyond measure. Put yourself in their shoes. If we had to do what they did, without electricity and all the things God provides us, it would be disastrous. We would surely die. So, realizing these things, we give Thanks. He has blessed us.**

**Conclusion**

 **This year will be different. How will you give thanks? Maybe not with friends and relatives but in family groups or alone. Maybe sick. Maybe without a job. Maybe without some of the things on the table you’ve had before. God does not always provide all those things listed in the explanation of the Lord’s Prayer at the same time. But He hears the prayers of the faithful. God’s provision is always there. And because He cares for us, we give Him thanks for all His gifts. Like our ancestors who suffered much more than us, like Paul in prison, and all the saints, let us give thanks to the Lord whose provision is always good. Amen.**

**May the peace of God that surpasses all our understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**