**Sermon- Thanksgiving Eve. 2021**

**Title: "Why Thanksgiving?"**

**Texts: Deut. 8:1-10, Luke 17:19**

**Prayer**

**Salutation**

**Bridge**

**If you saw our sign out front you noticed the title of our meditation for this day. Thanksgiving Day as we celebrate it here in our land is not in the Bible. But Thanksgiving is celebrated every day by devout Christians around the world. That concept is certainly in the Bible. Why Thanksgiving? You've heard the answer here many times before, "Because He is God, and we are not." And that is the answer. You can go home now. But seriously, the first commandment tells us every day what the reality of our existence is, "You shall have no other Gods before me." Each Wednesday morning, we pastors and sometimes others come together and discuss the scriptures and the doctrines of our faith. This commandment was our topic this past week. Our conclusion is that we place our God alone as the one to be worshipped and nothing or no one else. We are to fear, love and trust in God above all things. That is part of what we confess here before God and men in the Apostles Creed. In some ways, the creed sums up for us the "Why" of Thanksgiving.**

**Law**

**So, let me ask you a question or three. Why do you get together at Thanksgiving? Is it for the food? Or football with your family? Or possibly- tradition alone? Or is it for the right reason?**

**Our OT lesson today talks about people like that. Just like us. The Israelites that had been tested time and time again for their allegiance to the one and only true God. And after He brought them out of the land of Egypt, He tested them again in the desert. And there He gave them the Ten Commandments. The first commandment was the ultimate test for them. In the past, they had become like the Egyptians. They had trusted and put other gods on a pedestal, relying on them for rain, good crops, sunlight and so many other things. That was because they had forgotten about the Great "I AM" that Joseph had worshipped, and Moses now reminded them of. Not all of them had forgotten, but many had. Therefore, God was testing them in the wilderness for 40 years and in that time, they were totally dependent on Him. In that test the generation that had lived in Egypt died. They were just not thankful for what God had done for them. They failed to keep God's commands miserably, even setting up a golden calf and worshipping it instead. They complained about the food God gave them and even did abominable things so that snakes came and bit them. The only way to be saved was to look upon the cross with a serpent on it. Does that sound like anyone you know? Masses of people ungrateful for anything and only relying on other gods of this world? But the Israelites which had come to know "I AM" in the desert would go on to live in the land that God had promised Abraham 450 years before. This new generation would cross over to the land of milk and honey, because, He was their God, and they were His people. They had to learn the hard way what the one and only true God was and is.**

**A god is that to which we look for all good and in which we find refuge in every time of need. To have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in Him with our whole heart. If your faith and trust are right, then your God is the true God. If not, and you fail like the Israelites did, then you have not the true God. You have been tested and you have broken the first commandment. The purpose of the commandment is to place your trust in Him alone so that every time you meet hardship, you fly straight to Him and Him alone. He says, "Flee to me and let me be your God and no other." The Israelites failed that many times, even as they went into the Promised Land they feared. And we fail too. Especially when we fear. We look to anything that will relieve that. And when we do, we have broken the commandment. They lacked nothing in the desert, and by God’s grace, their shoes didn't even wear out after 40 years of walking! And we too have been provided for at a time in American history where the blessings of God have been outright- miraculous! And then we complain when inflation comes. Why do we only really get on our knees and thank Him on one special day? Do we, like the Israelites, forget all about Him and thank all the wrong gods we place before Him all the rest of the year?**

**Think about that for a minute. Especially when you sit down at the table and say to the group why you are thankful. I know many who do that ritual each year. We are thankful for a good crop, a good job, family, friends, even the meal, but to whom are we thankful *to*? It is assumed that we are thankful to God, but we should never assume anything. The leader of the house should ask, “What are you thankful to our God for this year?” We stress that we are thankful to the one and only true God who provided all those things out of His good and gracious will and hands. If we remember the Apostles’ Creed each and every day, we remember that our God is our provider. But when we don’t give to the one true God His proper due, we have placed something else above Him. And usually, it is us or some other god. We go to the Apostles then, for insight. And where did they understand their thoughts about this came from? The Word.**

**Gospel**

**The Apostles Creed spells out the "why" of Thanksgiving for us in the explanation of the first article in the catechism. We confess, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." What does this mean? (Explain method) "I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my sense, and still preserves them;" Let me stop there for a second. The lepers in our Gospel text today all knew that God had created them, or they would not have come to Jesus for healing. They believed that He was from God. But only one leper, seeing that he was healed, came back to worship, and give thanks to Him, who he now believed was the one and only true God and true man. And in that act of faith, or should I say belief in Jesus as his Savior, the leper was healed. The rest were just clueless as to what god to thank!**

**Let me go on with the explanation now. "(He has given me) also clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods; that He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life;" It would seem that this is the essence of the day. To the worldly mind this is so, for we live in two kingdoms, that of this world and also in the kingdom of heaven. This part is all about the stuff He gives *us in this world*. But we know that is not all that God does for us because it also says, "And that He defends me against all danger, and guards and protects me from all evil; and all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him. this is most certainly true." He truly does answer our prayer when we ask, “give us this day” in the realm of both kingdoms.**

**Now you're saying to yourself, "Oh, that's why." That is most certainly true, but that is not all. Here's where the kids' Bible story riddle question comes in. What seems to be missing, but is not? Jesus. Yes, that's always the answer! As part of the triune God that we hold dear and confess, Jesus did all these things as well. And He also did this- He came as our Redeemer. This is spelled out in the second article. What do we believe and confess? "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell ; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead."**

**What does this mean? "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born for the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all my sins, from death and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. even as He is risen from the dead, lives, and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true." Jesus is our Savior. He died for our salvation. He and the Father have provided everything we need in a world that ignores Him and is not thankful.**

**So now you're saying to yourself, "Oh, so that's why". Not so fast! Someone seems to be missing. And He is in the third article. We confess, “I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen. You get it. You know what this means, and I don’t need to read the explanation to you! Being in the flesh, we know we can’t come on our own to Jesus to thank Him for what He has done for us to save us. We know we can’t come to the Father without help either. We know we have to rely on the Spirit, the Helper Jesus sent us, because of our sinful condition. So that Helper guides us to be brought to faith by Him, sanctified by Him, that we may remember the One True God and kept in this faith until the last day. There is more to life than the world we live in. More to life than all the worldly He gives us. That is what He wishes for us. He wants to fill us. And in so doing, that we may see why, and especially to whom, to be thankful to each and every day, *for all we must do, is receive* and be blessed by that one and only true God for everything. *Everything*.**

**Conclusion**

**I know you may be thinking, “I could have picked up my catechism and read all of that myself.” But you haven’t lately, have you? We celebrate a Creedal Thanksgiving my dear ones. In it we confess our faith, (which Jesus says makes us well), in the One True God, and how He and He alone provides everything we have ever had, all magnificent blessings, including and especially our eternal salvation. That is the “why” of Thanksgiving. And it is most certainly true. As we wait for Him, who is our great hope, let us be filled with hope, comfort and peace, which He gives to us when we ask. Because He is our God and we are His people. Come and let us give thanks to Him! Let us partake in His meal, joyfully, openly, and abundantly, receiving His body and blood, the greatest thanksgiving of all. Amen.**