

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, November 24, 2020
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“O Give Thanks!”

READING: Psalm 100 – Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness to all generations. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Growing up in a farm community, I always looked forward to Thanksgiving. It was one of the most important holidays we celebrated, preceded only by Easter and Christmas. Farmers understand Thanksgiving in a way that city-dwellers would find difficult to duplicate. Every spring they till the land, almost literally bury thousands and tens of thousands of dollars in the ground in the form of fertilizers and seed, equipment costs and fuel. Then, they trust that the Lord will provide for them a harvest in the fall. If they get too much rain in the spring, the planting comes late. If it gets dry early, the plants suffer and get stunted, decreasing their yield. If the summer heat is too intense and the rains don't come, the crop can quite literally burn up in the fields. And, even if a bumper crop has come with wonderfully timed rains and clement weather, the harvest time can still cause trouble if the autumn rains come early. So, when Thanksgiving comes, the harvesting is usually completed, the crops are sold or stored, and the farmers have a pretty good idea of the return they've received on their springtime investments. They usually have good reason to “Sing to the Lord of Harvest” and to belt out “Now Thank We All Our God”.

In Judaism, the faithful also had a thanksgiving celebration. It was called Pentecost, or The Feast of Weeks, or The Harvest Festival. It took place at the end of May or in early June after the barley and wheat had been gathered in. They brought burnt offerings and grain offerings in thanksgiving for the produce God had provided them, the produce that would see them through the coming year with bread for the hungry and seed for the sower during the rainy season to come.

Fitting then, don't you think that Pentecost for the Christians became a celebration of the ingathering that took place on the day that the Holy Spirit came to rest upon twelve confused, reluctant, and hard-scrabble disciples of the Master who was slain but rose again. They preached the Gospel in multiple languages, sowing the seed of the Good News of Jesus, then watched in wonder as a harvest of righteousness and faith came to fruition right before their eyes. “First the blade and then the ear, then the full corn shall appear. Lord of harvest, grant that we, wholesome grain and pure may be.”

How “meet, right, and salutary” it is for us as God's family to thank and praise him for all that he has provided for us in this year fast coming to its end. I know, I know! I've groused about 2020 just like everyone else. It has been a bitter year in too many ways. We lost loved ones,

struggled with COVID-19 and all its attendant hassles, fears, and unknowns. We had riots in our cities, division in our streets, isolation in our homes, separation from friends and families, a fractious election, and scores of other disappointments and sorrows. But through it all, the Lord has been with us. He's provided resources, led us to new understandings, and continues to strengthen us with his word and his sacraments. God is still God. The King still reigns. Advent starts next week, and Christmas is close behind. We will sing his praises and trust in his goodness. So with our brothers and sisters across the fruited plain, let us give thanks to the Lord our God, for his mercy endures forever and ever. A Happy and Blessed Thanksgiving to each and every one of you! Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENT(S):

THANKSGIVING EVE SERVICE: Wednesday, November 25, 7:00 P.M. This service will also be shown online live at glcna.com.

ADVENT SERIES: "Act Justly, Love Mercy, and Walk Humbly with Your God" (Micah 6:8)
Wednesdays, 7:00 P.M. – December 2, 9, and 16

"GIFTS FOR KIDS" – Watch for announcements soon regarding the purchase, wrapping, and distribution of toys, games, and clothing needs for children in needy families – both within the congregation and in our community. I'll need shoppers and wrappers. If you can one or both, write a little note and get it to me, or call Karen and ask her to put a note on my desk. You'll hear from me.