

“O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually.” Psalm 105:1-4.

Dear Christian friends,

October in Canada, citizens are given the opportunity to celebrate two festivals: Thanksgiving and Halloween. Both events can have a strong Christian faith aspect associated with them. They both also can have a purely secular, non-faith reflection to them. Thanksgiving has retained more of its faith-basis than Halloween has. Thanksgiving as a sacred celebration can be associated across the whole spectrum of faith traditions. When I observe homes and yards that decorate for these festivals I note far more reflect our cultural Halloween than those that reflect symbols of Thanksgiving. Few homes decorate for Thanksgiving! Those decorating trends are a reflection of the faith that is celebrated and present in that residence – the god who is resident there.

This year, as we once again prepare to celebrate these festivals, I wonder how many citizens know the true basis of these festivals and how they will express that reflection. Post- COVID pandemic, I am struck by the depth and breadth of social disintegration that is happening in our civic world. I observe the phenomenal increase in those who are homeless and frequently suffering from addictions. I truly wonder where our “opioid use” crisis is going to end! Perhaps the state of our civic world is a reflection of who is “god” for the majority in our culture.

Martin Luther writes, “A ‘god’ is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with our whole heart. ...it is the trust and faith of the heart alone that make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust are right, then your God is the true God. Conversely, where your trust is false and wrong, there you do not have the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God. Anything on which your heart relies and depends, that is really your God.”<sup>i</sup> We are constantly exhorted to live in the fullness of that relationship that our LORD God establishes for us. For Christians that is centered exactly in God’s revelation and work of Jesus as the Christ.

While I prepare for these festivals as a Christian, I will reflect upon the incredible bounteous goodness that the LORD God has bestowed upon me again this year. It is not that I have lived such a holy, righteous life that I deserve this blessing. Rather it is a gift that the LORD has been gracious in offering to me. This year in particular, as I will transition into a new “demographic” I give deepest thanks to God for the blessing of life and health. I will officially become a “Senior Citizen.” When many people in our culture mark this transition with their retirement from their normal occupation, I hope the LORD continues to bless me with health and strength to continue in this vocation to which he has called me.

I do not take this blessing of the LORD God for granted. Five years ago I was recovering from my “nervous breakdown” and was six months out from the initial crisis time. This month five years ago was part of the most challenging time in that recovery process. Each day then my daily focus and prayer was that the LORD God would give me just enough strength, hope and faith to get through that one particular day. It took work and focus. Every day the alternative option to life was present to me. The devil constantly tempted me. One blessed gift that was present for me, and for which I give incredible

thanks, is the myriad of Christ-centered people who were praying for me. I had the surest fortification against the devil by your faithful prayers. It took time for my full recovery from my mental collapse; three years of patience, discipline and hope. Now the LORD God calls me to use his gifts of discernment and wisdom to manage my health and life.

This year as I transition into this new demographic reality of life, I constantly give thanks to the LORD God through Jesus as the Christ for his constant, never-failing gifts of mercy, forgiveness and bounteous provision. I do not know how long the LORD longs for me to serve in this call to Shepherd King Lutheran, but daily I will give thanks for his constant righteousness and holiness in calling me into life and allow him to sustain me.

We have these two great celebrations before us in this month of October. May the true reflection of God's presence and blessing be reflected in our celebration, so that true life and living can be known and shown in our world.

"O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples." Psalm 105:1.

Thankfully, in Christ forever,

Pastor Kevin.

---

<sup>i</sup> "The Ten Commandments – The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther." The Book of Concord – The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, editors. Fortress Press, Minneapolis. © 2000. P. 386