

318. "O Give Thanks unto the Lord!"

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Ps. 103, 1. 2.

If we wish to retain the blessings of the Reformation, we must be grateful for them. That we possess them is due to no merit of our own. We owe it entirely to God's grace. But God's grace will not forever remain with the ungrateful. One of the most stirring passages Luther ever penned is that in which he showed his people how the Gospel in the past has often been withdrawn from those who proved themselves ungrateful. "Palestine and the Orient had it; but gone is gone, they now have the Turk. Rome and the Latin country had it; but gone is gone, they now have the Pope." At the present time, four hundred years after the Reformation, we must add: Germany had it; but gone is gone, they now have the state church, filled with worldlings and infidels. To us here in this New World God has been more gracious than ever before since the time of Christ Himself. But unless we prove more grateful than our predecessors, gone will be gone, and we, too, shall lose the great blessings of the Reformation.

Let us, therefore, appreciate what God has given us. Let us live and love as people whose hearts are filled with God's boundless grace. We have the truth of the pure and unadulterated Gospel. Forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation was freely preached to us and made ours by faith. Oh, how we should thank our God that, despite our ingratitude, our indifference, and our lack of due appreciation, He has preserved His Word, His precious Gospel, to us in its purity all these many years!

Oh, therefore give thanks unto the Lord! Labor for the Lord prompted by gratitude. You should feel as though you could not do enough for Him, since He has done so much for you. And God has promised His children that they will be abundantly rewarded for all the labor they perform in His kingdom. His grace and mercy is so bountiful that He gives them not only eternal life for the sake of His beloved Son, but also additional glory in heaven, according to the pleasure of His grace.

Prayer.

O gracious and loving Father in heaven, grant that we may recognize all Thy blessings to be the result of Thy goodness, so that we may render Thee heartfelt thanks. Continue to visit our Lutheran Zion with Thy grace; develop and enrich it. Let the Sun of Righteousness give warmth to the soil of many hearts and send a plentiful rain, the Water of Life, into the barren hearts; water the furrows and moisten the plowed ground; give Thine increase to our spiritual harvest, so that our mission-fields may continue to yield abundant crops, to the end that many may come to the knowledge of the truth and that we may shout for joy and sing Thy praise forevermore. Amen.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

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