

***Thanksgiving (Eve) – November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024***  
***FEAST OR FAMINE?***

***Prayer***

Abba, open our eyes to all of the ways in which you have blessed each of us as individuals, as well as your family here at Redeemer during this past year.

AMEN

***Whose Is it Anyway?***

When I say Thanksgiving, what's the first thing that comes to your mind? If you're like me, it's the food and drink that many of us will enjoy tomorrow. While these may not be the most important things we are (or should be) thankful for, it's what our consumer culture leads us to focus on (along with the football games).

But even if we are truly thankful for what we have, we often don't take that understanding far enough.

One of the ways we don't take that understanding far enough is by limiting the SCOPE of what we are thankful for. Every Sunday, we pray the Lord's prayer, but when was the last time you looked at the explanation written by Luther in his Small Catechism?

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Let me refresh your memory.

### **Give us this day our daily bread.**

*What does this mean?* 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.

*What is meant by 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.

That's a lot more than just the sliced stuff from which we make sandwiches!

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The second misunderstanding is one of ownership. Again, every week when we present our offerings, I pray the first stanza of the Hymn *We Give Thee But Thine Own*.

*We give thee but thine own,  
whate'er the gift may be;  
all that we have is thine alone,  
a trust, O Lord, from thee.*

I was talking with the confirmation class the past couple of weeks on the topic of stewardship – that we don't really own any of our resources, be they time, talents, or treasures, but that we are merely stewards of what God has given to us to, not just for our benefit, but for the benefit of our neighbor as well.

Sometimes, when thinking about what we have, we can confuse what we **WANT** with that we **NEED**. As Paul says in verse 19,

*And my God will supply every **NEED** of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

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#### ***Paul's Perspective***

A bit earlier in the text, in verses 11 and 12, Paul clearly lays out his perspective on both feast and famine:

*Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.*

And if you think that facing plenty is easier than being in need, just ask someone who has won a big lottery prize about all the people who come out of the woodwork to help them spend their new-found riches.

Paul's primary focus wasn't even on the material, but on the spiritual fruits of his labor. As he writes in verse 17

*Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.*

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He understood that all of our resources – time, talents, and treasures, are but tools – the means to an end – for the proclamation of the Gospel that we as citizens of heaven are call to do; to tell those around us that because of the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus, that our sins have been forgiven and there is therefore no longer any condemnation for sin.

### ***Spiritual Food***

Let's return to that feast for tomorrow. The food and drink will most likely more than supply all our body's needs for fuel and nutrition for a couple of days. In fact, most people here in the U.S. are both wealthy and well fed when compared to the standard of living from across the globe.

But what about our spirits? Is it possible that with the culture's focus on health, fitness, and beauty that we spend more time working on our bodies that will fade like the flower of grass and neglect our eternal spirits? We count reps, miles, calories, macronutrients, steps and a myriad of other measures for the benefit of maintaining our physical health, but in what ways do we track our spiritual health?

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Do we have a healthy intake of God word? And is that intake properly balanced between the law – what God demands of us – and the Gospel – what God in Christ has already done for us?

Do we feast regularly on the body and blood of Christ, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins?

Do we spend time deepening our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ, so that we can truly provide that mutual conversation and consolation to each other, to be able to (Rom 12:15)

*Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.*

A new year is typically a time for resolutions, you know, promises made to oneself late in the year and kept for a week or maybe even a month into the near year, before we fall back into old habits.

As we begin a new church year, I would encourage you to think not about what you want to **DO** differently, but to identify **ONE** thing you can track to help you maintain focus on your spiritual health in the upcoming year. AMEN