

Thanksgiving
November 24, 2013
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Lamentations 3:22-25

Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him. (NIV)

What sounds do you associate with Thanksgiving? Perhaps it is the sound of relatives or friends pulling into the driveway or greeting you at the door when you come to visit. Kids, do you enjoy hearing the sounds of the Thanksgiving Day parade or maybe of your cousins or friends? When I think of Thanksgiving sounds, I remember all the years we spent at my Grandmas and hearing her get up several times in the night to check on her turkey. I remember listening to all the clanging and commotion in the kitchen as she was making some of her homemade pies. On Thanksgiving Day I always seem to hear sounds of laughing and some good holiday cheer. And every Thanksgiving I make sure I listen to the sounds of NFL football.

My prayer is this Thanksgiving that in every one of our homes there is another sound. This is a sound which comes only from a heart which has been changed by God. This is a sound that comes from people who are filled with gratitude. This is a sound that rings from people loud and clear because these souls have been touched by a God who is faithful, a God who is merciful, a God who has compassion, and a God whose love never fails. The sound I pray we hear and make this Thanksgiving is: **The Sound of True Thanks to the Lord!**

Today, I pray we join the Psalmist saying: ***"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever"*** (118). Indeed, our God is good. We have many examples of His love for us. If you had to make a list of all God gives you and does for you, you better have a lot of time on your hands because the list would be long. But have you ever ranked your blessings? Do we take time to consider the greatest gifts God gives us?

We have one blessing referred to in Lamentations that, if I had to guess, is not one we think about very often. How many of us wake up in the morning and thank God we are not consumed? Our family tradition growing up and still now is to go around the table on Thanksgiving and name some things for which we are thankful. In all the years of doing this I never have heard anyone say they are grateful that they are not completely destroyed by the Lord. I don't ever remember someone saying they are thankful that God's wrath didn't consume them today. Yet, is there any blessing greater than this? What could be worse than being swept away into the fires of hell?

Perhaps the reason we don't often consider this is a lack of understanding this truth, and a lack of contemplating what our sins really deserve. It becomes so easy to question why we would be consumed. After all, we are sinners just like everyone else. We are sinners living in homes with other similar sinners. We are sinners living in a world of sinners – in fact we start to look pretty good compared to

many of the sinners out there! But now stand next to a holy God on your own merits and what do you see and how do you feel? Stand next to the Lord who hates sin and whose wrath upon sinners is that of a consuming fire. Know this Lord sees even your every thought. Stand before God in whom there is no darkness at all. Understand the Lord has heard every word you have ever spoken. Attempt to stand and see the Lord's glory, and, as God told Moses, you will not be able to see it and live. For the Lord has witnessed all your sinful actions. The Lord has too often seen in each of our lives anything but the sound of true thanks.

Understanding this we will want to make all the louder the sound of true thanks to the Lord. ***"Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."*** We are not consumed. The Lord is not going to completely destroy us today. Instead, the Lord is kind and compassionate to us. The Lord is faithful and loving. Every day is a gift of His grace. His mercies are new to us every morning. This is true even on our darkest days. Let me repeat that – this is true even on our darkest days. The Lord's love and mercy and faithfulness are evident even when we are enduring our most painful trials.

All we have to do is look at the context surrounding these verses. If we think we have problems with our economy, health care, or whatever troubles might be on our minds it kind of pales in comparison to the problems here. Jerusalem lies in ruins. As enemies surrounded this once great city conditions got so bad the people in it resorted to cannibalism. The people of God were taken away as slaves and exiles by ruthless and heathen people. Read through this book of Lamentations and you will quickly see why others have also given it the title: *The Tears of Jeremiah*. Yet, even in the midst of all this we hear a sound – a sound of true thanks to the Lord. For ***"Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."***

The Lord did not destroy Israel completely because the Lord is loving and faithful. This faithfulness included a promise of a Savior. That is the same reason we are not consumed. For in His faithful love for us God sent Jesus to be consumed by His holy wrath – that's what happened to Jesus on Calvary's cross! We are not consumed because we don't have to try to stand before a holy God on our own – for Jesus lived and died in our place. God's compassion never fails us because our Good Shepherd laid down His life for us sheep. God's mercy to us is new every morning because Jesus went into and out of the grave to assure us forgiveness of sins and life with God is ours every day. Yes, great is His faithfulness!

With this confidence the prophet comforted himself with the thought, ***"The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him.*** If you are like me and many others on Thanksgiving you like to have large portions of the good food prepared for you. I like a full plate. What does it mean that the Lord is my portion? What did it mean when God told the Israelites He would be their portion? Perhaps a good example is the Levites. If you recall when the Lord gave Israel the Promised Land God divided it and gave every tribe a share or a portion - everyone that is except for the Levites which were the temple or church workers. The Lord was their portion. They were to put their trust in God to take care of them. They were to wait on the

Lord. The Lord would provide and take care of all their needs through the offerings of His people.

It means the same for us today when we say the Lord is my portion. It means we have something better than any food we ever tasted. It means we have in our possession something greater than anything this world could ever give us. We have the Lord. Our hope is in Him. Our trust is in Him. There are times we need to wait on Him. As long as we have the Lord our plate will always be filled with good things. The Lord is good to us. He will take care of us and provide for us and look after our every need. That's why we will respond with the sound of true thanks to the Lord. He is our portion.

An old farmer from Virginia was sitting on the porch with his wife one day when suddenly some emotion came over him when he realized what she meant to him. They had been married for 42 years and she was a faithful, loving, and hardworking wife who had been such a great lifelong companion. As he pondered all this he turned to her and said: *"Wife, you've been such a wonderful woman that there are times I can hardly keep from telling you."* This Thanksgiving, dear friends, please don't go without expressing to the Lord your true thanks. Tell the Lord what He means to you – in words and actions. Tell others what the Lord has done for you. For every day we get to wake up with sins washed away in Jesus' blood. Every day we get to go about our tasks knowing the Lord is on our side. Every day we get to experience His compassion, His mercy, and His unfailing love. How can we not make our homes places where one sound is always heard – the sound of true thanks to the Lord! **"Let the Amen Sound from his people again; Gladly forever adore him!" (CW 234) Amen.**