

Thanksgiving Promises

✦ **You will be enriched in every way.**

✦ **Your generosity will generate thanksgiving.**

In the Name of Jesus who became poor to make us rich, dearly redeemed believers:

Last Sunday two things happened that reminded me how rich we are, but not in ways the world would consider. One was a young boy in the congregation asking me again about Children's Lessons. He wants to help. I explained about one coming soon when our anniversary art is completed.

And what else could it be but the Holy Spirit making us rich with another question that really amazed me. If you heard last Sunday's sermon, you may remember the Lord saying through His Apostle Paul, "**And then the end will come....**" I mentioned this *goal* (τελος) appears in Jesus' Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28:20. Jesus promises literally to be with us *all the days until the gathered goal of the ages*. (πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος) On the Last Day Christ the King will bring everything swirling together, all the lines of power, every current of opinion, each little life lived for God by faith or by unbelief against God. All will be gathered together in Christ on Judgment Day. Like a vortex drawing water down a drain, God's power is bringing everything to its final **end** (συντελείας) at His own time, for His eternal purpose. So our member asked, "That τέλος is not related to what Jesus said on the cross when He died is it? What was that word?" Τετέλεσται – *It is finished*. Yes! Jesus was literally saying, "I've reached the *goal* (τελος) of bringing salvation to all people." A listener remembered that.

My dear friends in Christ, this is where all God's promises are bringing us, to God's *goal* (τελος) of getting us home to heaven. But these are not "pie in the sky" **Promises** only good for the next life. **Thanksgiving Promises** mean that here and now....

✦ **You will be enriched in every way.**

One of these days we're going to read all of 2 Corinthian 8, 9 together and let that be our sermon. For now, I hope you'll take a few minutes this Thanksgiving to read these two encouraging chapters. God was here accomplishing something which human governments cannot force no matter how hard they tax their citizens or seize their property. There's genuine enrichment going on here that defies imagination where those with plenty gladly help those in need. But it begins with recognizing your own poverty.

Let's say the Prize Patrol pulled up to your house with a check for a million dollars. "That's one visitor I'd like to have!" – like so many Americans, you think? But then you discover why so many wish they could get their lives back like before. Nothing is ever the same. First, whatever you thought you got is cut in half by taxes. You may even become a target for taxes you never knew about. Many winners have to move because your neighbors think you should pay their bills. Some friends leave; others pop out of the woodwork from who knows where. Suddenly you have money to argue about with your spouse. Now expectations by your heirs just shot through the roof. And that dream that money could solve all your problems proves to be a lie. With the Prize Patrol at the front door your quiet life went out the back.

Greedy people with lots of money and property can't enjoy it. They're constantly looking for more, hoarding what they have, and wondering why they can't be happy. Peace is gone as soon as they can buy everything they want because things never satisfy and time is always short. Health runs away with wealth. Greedy people may even want to keep everything for their children. "But what will I use to buy food?" they ask. Rich in this world cannot prevent poverty of the soul at the gates of death.

That's why this is priceless. Even with nothing of earthly value, **You will be enriched in every way.** *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”* (2 Corinthians 8:9 NIV84) Jesus taught us to sing, “Nothing in my hand I bring. Simply to Thy cross I cling.” Not all the wealth of earth could remove a single sin from God's record. Truly it has been said, “Before God, we are beggars all.” But by faith in Jesus Christ, you have the gift of God's righteousness. His forgiveness opens wide the doors of heaven while you fling wide the portals of your heart. Your treasures are all up there with God. And His **Promises** are right here for you now, everything you need day by day, and even this promise: *“Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.”* (Psalm 37:4 NIV84)

Dear Lord, in you I have all that I need. The rich stores of your grace can never run out. And all this is not just for me, but for my children and grandchildren too. ***I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.*** (Psalm 37:25 NIV84) You be my shopping mall, my grocery cart, the utility that won't freeze me out and the mortgage company that won't foreclose. ***“Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.”*** (Proverbs 30:8)

✠ Your generosity will generate thanksgiving.

Between here and God's *goal* (τελος) of heaven, God's got another *goal* (τελος) for you. Did you catch that in the second half of our verse? ***“You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.”***

This takes me back to one Thanksgiving many years ago. I was at home, but felt really down. My aunt asked me why, but I didn't understand until years later. I wanted a family of my own and I wanted to know what to do with my life. I was finishing those teen years when God first teaches us to trust Him with everything: your relationships, your education, your career, your family and marriage – if God so chooses to give these. And if not, to learn what it means that God fills all the gaps so that you can be truly joyful in Jesus and at peace no matter what your circumstances. Moses taught the Israelites about God's peace in times of prosperity. Paul wrote about joy and thankfulness from prison. Jesus showed how only one leper out of ten actually came back with sincere thanks to God. **Thanksgiving** is a learned skill: putting God's Word together with real life experience and then overflowing in rich **generosity**.

Poor people often know this joyful **generosity** better than the rich. Earlier Paul wrote about the Macedonians like Lydia and the jailer at Philippi: ***“Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.”*** (2 Corinthians 8:2-5 NIV84)

Isn't that the key? Give yourself first to God, then to His people in selfless service and Christ-like love. You can't stay lonely when you're busy helping others overcome their loneliness. We're surrounded by miserable people who need to know what you know about Jesus Christ. He's their Lord and Savior too. Why crawl inside a lonely shell when you could be busy helping them see Jesus our eternal riches?

That's why we're here enjoying new life in Christ at New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church, Shoreview, Minnesota. Years ago generous WELS Christians gave thank offerings to God to spread the Gospel of forgiveness. They supported the schools where your pastor was trained, then paid the freight to support our family while the congregation got its start. Their **Thanksgiving** now generates more ***“thanksgiving to God”*** because here we are. Our gifts are joining theirs as the joy of Jesus spreads and grows. God's *goal* (τελος) is fast approaching. His **Thanksgiving Promises** power our way home. *“Praise God from whom all blessings flow!”* Amen.

For the study behind this sermon or for copies email m.cordes@comast.net .
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