

***The Five "Thank Yous"*** (Deut 8:1-10).

\* Tomorrow we'll gather around our tables furnished with roasted turkeys surrounded with fresh cranberry-orange crush, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, green beans, ambrosia fruit salad and other proper food for "Turkey Day." As we think about all these, we ask ourselves, "When we celebrate this Day, do we celebrate it for ourselves or for someone else?" Well, it seems we celebrate it not only for ourselves, but for relatives and friends. Then, enjoying with delicious food, doesn't it mean that we are thanking ourselves? If we are not quite right, please correct us. "Ah, it is not quite true. By the way, what is true?" Then our memory flashes back to the school time when we were taught that originally this Day was to thank not ourselves but God for the plentiful harvest of the present year and in remembrance of God's goodness towards 56 surviving immigrants. The record informs us that the harvest of 1621 was bountiful and the American colonists celebrated this event with a feast in recognition of God's goodness to them. At the same time, eating delicious food and watching the football game after Macy's parade is what we like too. For this pleasure we thank God as well. At this moment, we count a number of reasons to give God a threefold "Thank You" – for the bountiful harvest, memory lesson, and pleasure.

\* Significantly, the scripture lesson for today (Deut 8:1-10) is also about the plentiful harvest, memory lesson, pleasure, and even more. It begins with recollecting the mighty acts of God taken place in the vast and hostile environment of sand and stone. From the broader context we've learned how the children of Israel were treated by the Lord as He had led them from Egypt to the Promised Land. For 40 years the people were fed with the heavenly bread called manna, with birds from sky, and with water from the rock. In the morning they usually harvested manna, and each evening they searched for the wild birds. The Scripture says that manna resembled a flake-like thing that covered the ground. Its flavor reminded them of honey mixed with oil; apparently, it contained both fats and sugars as well as all necessary minerals and vitamins. Manna was a very healthy food, no preservatives at all. Also, as it was said, God gave people meat of the wild ducks and geese to eat. Each evening these birds fell from sky right in the midst of their camp. Clean and tasty water also was provided from the rock without measure. Another mighty thing, according to God's word, people's clothing and shoes did not wear while they were in the wilderness. And finally, the Lord brought his people into the land abounding with fountains and springs, a bountiful land that produced all kind of vegetations, grains, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, olive trees and honey. In other words, the land where people had everything for the good life, (v.v.7-9). In exchange for all these God said, *you shall bless Me for the good land I have given you*, (v.10).

\* In our culture, people's thankfulness toward each other is usually expressed in both ways, by words and sometimes by deeds. In fact, a "Thank you card" brings pleasure if it is sent for a gift received. In this instance we recall the folk wisdom, which is to say that the people's good deeds always speak louder than their good

words. With regard to the Semitic culture, the idea about words and deeds is always true. Once the children of Israel made a solemn promise to God with grateful hearts, (Exo 24:7). In a similar manner, it is like one of us who would write a "Thank you card" to his generous boss. *Dear Sir, all that you have set before us we'll do, and we will be obedient. Many Thanks for your kindness!* Certainly, the boss would be happy to know our intention to be the loyal employees, especially if we keep our promises. Unfortunately, it didn't happen with Israel. The solemn promise soon was broken when Israel refused to enter into the blessed Land for the fear of people of that land, (Num 14:3-4). Even, they were ready to submit themselves to Egyptian authority again. They said, *"Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt,"* (Num 14:4b). This and many other instances proved the people's ungratefulness; by nature we are the same as those who died in the wilderness, we make to give our word but then we don't keep it. Knowing our weakness God promised Israel a Savior who would come and save us from our ungratefulness that causes people's death. With Christ's salvation we were enabled to believe in Christ and by the power of his Spirit were turned into living sacrifices acceptable to God, (Rom 12:1). It produces in us unending thanks to God the Father knowing by the Spirit that we are Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise, (Gal 3:29).

\* Now let's hear the reason of our eternal thankfulness to God in Christ Jesus. *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word,* (2 Thes 2:16,17). Experiencing the eternal comfort and living hope - *we wonder as we wander, out under the sky, how Jesus the Savior did come for to die for poor, lonely people like you and like I, we wonder as we wander, out under the sky,* (paraphrase of *I Wonder as I Wonder* by J. Niles). Thanks to Jesus we became the heirs of the amazing Land, the land of eternal bliss prepared by God for his people. In return for God's loving-kindness to us, ought we always to give thanks to God, not today only or tomorrow but always? Yes, we ought! Listen, this is the next and the most important reason of our gathering tomorrow around family tables! At this moment, we recount a number of reasons to tell God "Thank You". They are "Thank yous" for the bountiful harvest, for the memory lesson, for pleasure, and our special "Thank You" for eternal life through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

\* And finally, reflecting on the funeral service performed yesterday for our brother E. S. and on the Day of Thanksgiving tomorrow, we may like to give God an additional "Thank You" for all the faithful who are gone before. They are not lost, not separated from us permanently; they are only waiting in another place nearby for us to join someday later in *the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the blest, obeying the Lord's invitation,* (# 510, LSB).

Happy Thanksgiving to everybody!