

**ALL OF YOU GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD**

Christ is Risen!

Hear again the Word of God for this sixth Sunday of the season of the Resurrection of our Lord,

*You all give thanks to YHWH, for (He is) good;  
for unto forever (is) His hesed.  
For He satisfies (the) soul of (the) thirsting one,  
and (the) soul of (the) hungry one He fills with good.<sup>1</sup>*

**Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

The texts for this week are given to lead believers into offering intercessory and thanksgiving prayers. This is the traditional time of the Church Year for the congregations of the Lord to call upon Him specifically through petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings. (It is not that we do not regularly offer the sacrifices of prayer, praise and thanksgiving. It is just that encouragement to prayer finds greater emphasis in the Church this week than at most other times of the year).

Rogate (Pray) Sunday finds its roots in the Church's attempts to turn converts to Christianity away from pagan practices about 16 centuries ago. In history, from the 4th century AD onward, the three days just before the Feast of the Ascension came to be known as Rogation Days, or Prayer Days. They replaced the Roman feast of *Robigalia* (for mildew and rust – wherein prayers were offered to the gods against blights upon grain).

From the early Christian centuries, in certain parts of the world, in rural farming areas in particular, congregations followed their pastors and walked the Church's parish boundaries while chanting the Litanies. As they did so, they were offering the sacrifice of prayer to the One True God. They would intercede in particular for those who had been afflicted by calamities. As they did so, they would offer thanks

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<sup>1</sup> *Psalm 107:1,9.*

for the fruits of the earth and the fruits of human work.<sup>2</sup> In following that practice, people were reminded of their role as God's stewards of His creation.<sup>3</sup>

Today, in some major confessions of the Faith, the days leading up to Thursday's High Feast have been declared Days of Special Prayer. In others, where there is little thought given to the Third Article of the Creed, these Rogation (Prayers) Days receive no special attention. Like human families which forget to recall the stories of their great-grandparents and other ancestors, churches can lose their sense of rootedness. Congregations that fail to regularly recall the reasons for the traditions of the Church Fathers head into the future with little foundation for that which they do in receiving God's gifts. The current generation becomes disconnected from previous generations. The sense of belonging to a greater whole is diminished. Church becomes something for the moment, detached from the ancient faithful.

That is nothing new. The ancient Israelites succumbed to temptations to divorce themselves from the faith of their fathers. They worshipped other gods alongside the One True God. God, through His priests and prophets repeatedly called them to return to the Faith once given. They continually rebelled, testing His patience. Yet, God showed His mercy for generations after His Word to turn from sin and walk in new life had gone forth. He delayed punishment on account of those who would hear His call to repentance and be saved

When, in time, after decades into centuries of repeated warnings and calls to repentance had been given, God punished His people in their sins, they were driven from the Promised Land. They were scattered abroad both in the 8th and 6th centuries BC. In time, they received the due punishment for their sins.

When they cried out their repentance, God, through pagan rulers, returned them to the Promised Land. During the years of Ezra-Nehemiah (this is a call for you to read those Books again), God allowed His people to come home. That time forms the

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<sup>2</sup> Strodach, Paul Zeller. *The Church Year: Studies in the Introits, Collects, Epistles and Gospels*, Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, 1924, 166f.

<sup>3</sup> Adam, Adolf. *The Liturgical Year: its history & its meaning after the reform of the liturgy*, Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1981, 1991 (190ff).

original setting for today's Psalm. Someday, the Israelites return to Jerusalem and Judah may serve as a remembrance for sinners like us who, when confronted with the full effects of our sins, repent, turn and cry out to God. That thought leads us back to the theme verses for today:

*You all give thanks to YHWH, for (He is) good;  
for unto forever (is) His hesed.  
For He satisfies (the) soul of (the) thirsting one,  
and (the) soul of (the) hungry one He fills with good.<sup>4</sup>*

With those first two lines, the fifth book of the Psalter begins. In them, God's people are called to give thanks to Him. They are told why: God is good, and His loving-kindness is eternal. Like the ancient repentant faithful returning to the Promised Land from years of exile on account of their sins, you too, in repentance, may follow the words of the Rogate Psalm. That means that you are free, whenever God delivers you from your daily sins, when you behold that His Word has made you whole, you are free to offer prayers of thanksgiving to the God who has satisfied your soul and fed your eternal life with good. You are free to remember today's Prayer Psalm and the theme of the next few days: the call to offer the sacrifices of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving.

That is why the theme for today consists of the beginning and ending verses of the Rogation Days Psalm. Each year, on this day, we have a call to give thanks to God. Then we are given the reasons why we want to thank Him.

For many of us, that is easier to do when we know that God has *deliver[ed] us from evil. (Lord's Prayer, Seventh Petition)*. That was the apparent reason, as mentioned earlier, for the composition of the 107<sup>th</sup> Psalm. God's once-captive people were freed to return to the Promised Land.

God's deliverance from evil is reason enough for you and me to sing, chant or say today's Psalm. You and I, and all people, from the moment of conception were captive – to sin, death and hell. God, on account of His grace, mercy and loving-kindness

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<sup>4</sup> Psalm 107:1,9.

comes to us in that state with His Word. That Word calls us out of our sins and grants us His forgiveness. When we hear and believe that, then the words of today's call to prayer take on deeper meaning for us. Hear now again, the call of the Psalm for the days of Rogation (Prayer):

*You all give thanks to YHWH, for (He is) good;  
for unto forever (is) His hesed.  
All (the) ones being redeemed cause to say to YHWH,  
whom He has redeemed from (the) hand of (the) Adversary.  
And from lands (He) gathered them in,  
from east and from west, from north and from south.<sup>5</sup>*

The Word of God is very clear as to who should give thanks to the Great I Am. "We" are any and all who are being, and have been, redeemed from the clutches of the Adversary. In their original context, the words of the Psalm declared the remembrance that God has bought back His people from their human captors. He had redeemed them by granting the gift of grace to a pagan king. They had been allowed to return to their land, to rebuild the Temple of the Lord and the walls of Jerusalem.

In their later context – used in the Lord's public Services to the Church – the opening words of today's call to prayer are for all who know and believe that they have bought back from being under the captivity of man's most ancient Adversary. God did not pay our Adversary the redemption price. He is the one who accuses of their sins those who remain unrepentant and unforgiven. No, the Adversary got nothing good from God's payment of the redemption price. God paid the price He Himself demanded for sin – that is death.

Through that death, God has gathered us into His Holy City on earth. As you consider your origins, if you know your Church family history, and have remembered the stories of your ancestors in the Faith, you find yourself connected to them and their song of thanksgiving. Their intercessions become your intercessions.

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<sup>5</sup> Psalm 107:1-3.

But, if you do not know the narratives of the ancient faithful, you will have difficulty in wholly joining your voices to theirs through the Word of God. Oh, you can voice the words without understanding. At best, the confession of today's Psalm has gone out of your mouth. When you leave here, it will have flown from your thoughts. You will have been a believer in the moment, and may fall into becoming a wanderer from the Faith for the time to come.

To help you understand what God has done for you that you may speak the Psalm of Prayer and believe, He has given you a worldly example of what He means to do when He again returns you from wandering in sin. Consider how you or your ancestors may have arrived into this State and Nation. Reflect on the family origins — those which have not been forgotten, of your brothers and sisters in Christ in this place. God has truly brought us, brought you here. Remember the price some paid that you might be free to receive God's gifts this day.

In partial fulfillment of the Psalm, God has gathered us into His Church in Catalina *from east and from west, from north and from south.*<sup>6</sup> In our midst are first generation Americans from China, England and Germany. In this household, there are people drawn from New York, California, Minnesota and Florida. Some of us have roots in Russia, in Guatemala, in Mexico and other far flung lands.

We, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, are the ones to whom the Psalm speaks and the ones to whom the Psalm is given to speak. Christians have been redeemed from facing mankind's ancient Adversary. As we remain in Christ, that Satan has no charge to bring against us before the eternal Judge. Our legal adversary in the heavenly courtroom has been banished, he cannot harm us there. He has been bound to this earth.

Here He will remain until our Redeemer casts him into the Lake of Fire at the End of Days. That means that though the Satan, our Adversary, cannot bring condemnation about us before God the Father, the Devil and his minions can deceive us

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<sup>6</sup> Psalm 107:3b.

into thinking that we have sins which cannot be forgiven. The Devil can try to mislead you into thinking that you have out-sinned the grace, mercy and loving kindness of God. He has generations of humans upon which he has worked his wiles. He knows our fallen nature, for he was there when the curse was pronounced. He can read your reactions to his temptations, and he can work to turn you from our Redeemer. His accusations still sting while we are in this mortal life.

That is one reason why that One Who shed His blood into death gave you the gift of prayer. When you pray, from the scriptures as today's Psalm directs, your thoughts are aligned with God's thoughts – even if for just a moment. In giving back to God the sacrifice of prayer, especially when that is joined with others in the Lord's Service – Jesus' words, *whatsoever all of you may ask the Father He will give to all of you in My Name* – are fulfilled in and through the united petitions of the faithful.<sup>7</sup>

That is why we take time to offer, in the corporate prayers of the Church, in accord with the Word of God, *petitions, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, for all men, for kings and all the ones in prominence*.<sup>8</sup> That is why we pray for politicians you cannot stand. The Word of God gives us reason to offer intercessory prayer and regularly name the names of people you and I may not know. In hearing of them, we are reminded that those who are called to recite in the Faith today's Psalm are more than those we see here.

The prayers of the Church, of those united by Christ in Him, of those who have been bought back from the eternal destiny of those who reject Christ, our prayers are heard for Christ's sake. As we say, chant or sing the prayers of the Church Catholic, we are reminded that we are hearing thoughts from the Mind of God. He has revealed His will and desires to us through His Word. Our thoughts are guided to follow His thoughts and our words become molded to His Word. True prayer relies upon the mercy of God, *when we believe that we are heard because of Christ...*<sup>9</sup> When, in time, we behold His

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<sup>7</sup> John 16:23b.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Timothy 2:1-2a.

<sup>9</sup> *The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. 1959 (T. G. Tappert, Ed.) (158). Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press.

answers to our prayers offered through His Word, we then, as in this Prayer Sunday, are moved to confess with the Church of Old:

*Let them cause to give thanks to YHWH for His hesed,  
and His wonderful works for (the) sons of Adam.*

The “them” in that text are you who believe. You, in this age, are described by the Psalm to have come through the spiritual wilderness of sin. You have been lost in ways apart from His Word. You have hungered and thirsted for God’s mercy, loving-kindness and grace. You have been, through the Church of the ages, joined to the fathers of the Faith. You are free to declare God’s mercy in this generation. That is because you know and believe that the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, died in your sins and paid the price the Holy God demanded that you might be declared right with Him. To that we continue to proclaim:

Christ is risen!

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

Resurrection VI (*LSB* One-year series)

Psalm 107:1-9; Numbers 21:4-9; I Timothy 2:1-6; John 16:23-33

May 25, 2014

*Paster Michael A. Morehouse*  
***Soli Deo Gloria***

**Psalm 107:1-9 (Second translation)**

*You all give thanks to YHWH, for (He is) good;  
for unto forever (is) His hesed.  
All (the) ones being redeemed cause to say to YHWH,  
whom He has redeemed from (the) hand of (the) Adversary.  
And from lands (He) gathered them in,  
from east and from west, from north and from south.*

*They wandered in (a) wilderness, in (a) waste (of a) way;  
[a] city to dwell in, not they found.  
Hungry ones, also thirsty ones,  
their soul in them fainted.  
Then they cried to YHWH in their trouble,  
from their distresses He caused to deliver them.  
And He led them in (a) straight Way,  
they reached (a) city to dwell in.  
Let them cause to give thanks to YHWH for His hesed,  
and His wonderful works for (the) sons of Adam.  
For He satisfies (the) soul of (the) thirsting one,  
and (the) soul of (the) hungry one He fills with good.*

**From the Epistle:**

*For (there is) one God, and one Mediator of God and men, (the) Man Christ Jesus, the One giving Himself (as) ransom for all men, by the witness of its own season.*

*That we remain tranquil and still in life, that we might continue to lead (lives) in all godliness and gravity.*