

**November 24 Worship  
Thanksgiving Sunday**

**Announcements/Joys-**

**Time Of Quiet Meditation-** *“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”* Colossians 3:17

**Opening Scripture-** Psalm 93(page 517-518)

**Opening Chorus-** 3-Come Thou Almighty King(verse 1)

**Responsive Call To Worship-**

Leader: In deep gratitude we come to worship God.

**People: We recognize God as the source of all goodness.**

Leader: All good gifts come from the Spirit of God.

**People: Love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, gentleness are all of God.**

Leader: We come with grateful hearts, not for things, but for who God is.

**People: We gather to show our gratitude in song and prayer.**

**Hymn-** 51- Crown Him With Many Crowns

**Unison Prayer-** God, You reign! Robed in majesty and armed with strength, You hold our world and our lives securely. Your throne has stood for all eternity. From everlasting to everlasting, You are God. Even when the waters rise up, when surging seas threaten to overwhelm us, and pounding waves crash around us, we know that You are mightier, You are more powerful than the threats we face. Holy God, Your decrees are firm and unshakable and will last forevermore. We pray as Jesus taught, saying....*Lord's Prayer...*

**Gloria Patri-** Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,

World without end. Amen, Amen.

**Old Testament Scripture-** Daniel 7:9-10,13-14(page 769)

**Special Music-**

**Gospel Scripture-** John 18:33-37(page 943)

**Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace**

**Hymn-** 278- Lo, He Comes With Clouds Descending

**New Testament Scripture-** Revelation 1:4-8(page 1072)

## Message

### *“Giving Thanks For What Is Coming”*

Here we are again preparing ourselves for Thanksgiving Day. What are you thankful for this year? Each of us have our own list of things that we should give thanks for and there are some things that we may not be so thankful about. It is important that we take a good hard look at just how many parts of our lives may or may not be what we want. There are those parts of our lives that we may find not to our liking, but need be the way they are despite how we feel about them. Sometimes we need to give thanks for what we think is opposite of good for us.

As I grow older, it is amazing just how fast time goes by. Here we are at Thanksgiving and then 3 days later we will begin our observance of Advent. After Advent comes Christmas and then we begin a New Year. There is not a whole lot of time left for contemplation of what all this holiday stuff means. Just take a moment to think about it; One month from tomorrow is Christmas and we aren't prepared for Halloween which went by before we knew it. December 1<sup>st</sup>, next week, is the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent. The 4 weeks before Christmas each have their own theme; Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. The Advent season ends on Christmas Eve when we light the Christ Candle which celebrates the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Perhaps it is fitting that we celebrate Thanksgiving for our earthly blessing and then spend a month contemplating our spiritual blessings.

There are certain things that we need to be aware of this season. As I grow older, I spend more time thinking about how and why we celebrate certain holidays in our church life. In the last few years, I have come to the realization that we may be celebrating some of our church holidays for the wrong reasons. This season, for example, we are giving thanks primarily for our physical blessings. The holiday began as a day of thanks for a plentiful harvest and the ability to get through a coming winter. Advent is celebrated as a time of waiting and preparation of the birth of a Savior. The problem is that we need to give thanks for the spiritual over the material blessings and when it comes to Advent; we need to understand that we are spending our time in anticipation of something that has already occurred. While it is proper to celebrate Jesus' birth, we must not make the mistake of looking forward to something that happened 2,000 years ago.

Yes, we should celebrate the birth of Jesus but not as if it is something we are looking forward to but as something that we are giving thanks to God for doing. As we spend our time preparing for His birth, we need to acknowledge the importance of getting ourselves ready for His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. As we read the scripture lessons regarding Jesus' birth, we need to spend some time learning about what is foretold about the time when He will come again. As much fun as it is preparing for His birthday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming has a stronger importance to us because need to prepare ourselves, just as those people 2,000 years ago, prepared themselves. If we study the expectations of the people of Israel in the time of Roman occupation, we will find a deep misunderstanding of what His birth was meant to be.

The people of Jesus' time were expecting someone to come from God to take up arms and free them from the oppression of Rome. They misinterpreted the scriptures to fit their own desires, missing some of the reasons why Jesus was sent here. They were looking for a new king, a Savior, to release them from bondage. As we study scripture, we learn that it was not Jesus' mission to set up a new earthly kingdom. It was His mission to prepare us for the eternal kingdom promised to humanity by God, the Father of all. Something that was in the future that

no one knew the time or the place. All we have been told is the way and manner that it would unfold. If we read the prophecies regarding the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming, what is going to take place is not pretty. Trust me when I tell you that when the day comes that what is foretold comes to pass, the world will be in a turmoil unlike anything ever seen before.

Why am I going into this doom and gloom story line anyway? This season is a time of thanks and preparing for the joyous event of Christ's birth. There is enough trouble out there in the world, we should not have to concern ourselves with more. While this is true, we also must be aware that there is more to the story than Jesus was born and we celebrate in December, then in spring we have Easter where we commemorate the death and resurrection. For some strange reason, we seem to want to ignore the continuing story of what God has in store for us.

If we honestly take the Bible in its totality, it is the complete story of God's creation from creation to the birth of God's eternal kingdom. If we are willing to accept that the Bible is God's true Word, we must take the account of the end times just as true as the Christmas story. Are we going to be as thankful for God's blessings when the tribulation comes as we are now while times are good? At least as good as we here in this nation have it. Take just a moment to stop and think about the people in Ukraine or somewhere else in this troubled world. What have they to be thankful for this year? How will they rejoice in the birth of a Savior while their world is in turmoil? Is our faith strong enough to give thanks when times are desperate or are we only faithful when God does things our way?

We must admit that we have it pretty good here in this nation. Yes, there are those who are in need. Yes, there are families in trouble. Take a good hard look at how the majority of the world lives, the poorest of those who live in the United States have more to be thankful for than those who survive, barely, in most nation. We are a nation blessed with prosperity but most other nations have people with a stronger faith in God than we can comprehend. It is a fact that the Christian faith goes through its strongest growth in places where troubles are the hardest. Just take a look right here in this country. When disaster strikes or things get tough, church attendance grows. People turn to God when they hurt and then forget when things get better. We seem to misunderstand what God expects of us. The birth of Jesus, our Savior is a glorious event and should be celebrated with Joy and Thanksgiving. The 2<sup>nd</sup> coming, with all the trials and turbulence, hardships and destruction, should also be met with the same response. Why? Because it will be the fulfilment of God's promise to make His creation perfect once again.

It is our responsibility to learn what God has planned and prepare ourselves to meet it in a manner set down in the Word of God, by God, so that we will benefit. Remember, it is God's world and we are His creation. If we do it His way, the Kingdom will be ours for eternity. Thanks and Praise Be to God. Amen.

**Prayers of People/Prayer-** Lord God, our Provider. We worship you as the one who meets our needs, who grants our daily bread, who restores our humanity. We worship you as the God who knows human need from experience, who knows want, and thirst and humiliation. And we worship you as your people, in a world where wealth is mixed with poverty; where we have all we need, but don't know how to share. Where want, and hunger and thirst and humiliation are hidden from those with the power to offer challenge and bring change. So, open our eyes. Not only that we learn sad facts about the world. But open the eyes of our heart,

that we may feel our place in this world, as your people Where there is need, teach us to learn where our wealth lies, and help us to give. Where there is injustice, teach us to learn the causes, and help us to fight. Where there is brokenness, teach us to learn of our own brokenness, and help us to bring wholeness. Help us to look to you, that we neither remain ignorant of the world, nor lose ourselves in despair at its brokenness. Show us how to worship you, the crucified God, the risen God, the God who provides. Help us to carry our cross, to accept your gift of new life, to bring that gift to others. In the name of our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

**Closing Hymn-** 332- God Of Grace And God Of Glory

**Benediction-** As you go from here, may you experience God's favor, and rest in the peace that comes from the One who is, who was, and who is yet to come; To him be glory and power, forever and ever. Amen.