

Our Thanks And Our Prayer At The End Of The Church Year.

Text: Col 1:9-14

1) Our Thanks

Suggested Hymns:

2) Our Prayer

487, 490, 422, 467, 556

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Colossians 1:9–14, ⁹ *For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;* ¹⁰ *that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;* ¹¹ *strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;* ¹² *giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.*

¹³ *He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,* ¹⁴ *in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

This is the Last Sunday in the Church-Year. The ecclesiastical, or church-year begins with the first Sunday in Advent, and closes with the last Sunday after Trinity.

As in the secular year we have four seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter, likewise we have four seasons in the church-year: the Advent and Christmas season, the Lenten season, the Easter season, and the Pentecost and Trinity season.

The number of Trinity Sundays varies according to the time of Easter. When Easter is early, there may be as many as twenty-seven Sundays after Trinity, and when Easter is late, there may be as few as only twenty-two Sundays after Trinity.

Today is the Last Sunday in the Church-Year. Now if you review the past, my friends, if you recall to your mind the things which were done in the church during the past Church-Year, have you not all the cause in the world to praise and thank your God?

We had a joyful mission festival, we had our Church festivals and regular divine services. Through these the Lord has filled us with faith and courage. Are not these things worthy to be thankful for?

True, some of us may have also had to cope with adverse circumstances and difficulties. God in His wise providence may have taken some of those who were dear to us, from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven. But did not the Lord, our God, comfort us with His divine Word in all our afflictions?

And if today we look into the future, what better thing can we pray for than that He would be with us in the future as He has been with us in the past, and that He should bless us with all heavenly blessings in the coming Church-Year?

The Epistle of the day discloses to us that these should be our thoughts. Our theme for today is *Our Thanks And Our Prayer At The End Of The Church Year*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Our Thanks

For what must we thank God at the end of the Church-Year? Not so much for the temporal blessings which He has bestowed on us as, rather, for His spiritual blessings.

The end of the secular year is the proper time to remind us of all those unmerited blessings which God has bestowed on our mortal bodies. God has supplied us with all the necessities of life, He has guarded and protected us from evil, He has averted fatal calamities from us, given us health, and preserved our lives.

But the end of the Church year reminds us especially of the spiritual blessings which we have received, and of all those things which God has done for our immortal souls.

And what is the great gift which stands out prominent here and for which we owe thanks to our God first of all? It is the great gift of which the Apostle speaks

in the passage which precedes our text and which he calls *“the word of the truth of the gospel.”*¹

In our church we have the Word of the Truth. We have the pure and unadulterated Word of God and the correct use of the holy Sacraments. In our church we have the Word of God as it is taught in the Bible, Scripture is explained by Scripture, and no interpretation is put forth which in any way conflicts with the clear sayings of God.

How confident can we be, then, that we have the truth, and that we do not err taking the Word of God as a lamp unto our feet and as a light unto our path!²

There are many churches in our day which no longer cling to the pure Word of God, but deviate from it and teach otherwise than God’s Word teaches, thus abandoning the truth of which Jesus says John 17:17, *“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”*

And in our church we have the truth of the Gospel. We do not have a new Gospel, not a modern gospel which does away with the Saviour Jesus, and denies His divinity and His redemption, and lowers Him to a mere model for all people to follow.

We have the old Gospel, the Gospel as set forth in the Holy Scriptures and proclaimed by the Lord Jesus Christ and by His Prophets and Apostles. It is the Gospel which informs us that Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners, that He has bled and died on the cross for us all, and that we shall have eternal life through faith in His name.

O how we should thank our God that, in spite of our ingratitude, our laxity and lack of due appreciation, He has preserved to us in its purity His Word, His precious Gospel, in the past Church year!

But that which must urge us to thankfulness is the fact that the Word of God has manifested its wonderful power among us, and that the Gospel of Christ has brought us to the faith and kept us in the faith, as the Apostle says: *“¹² giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”*

My dear Christians, what great things God has done for you through His Word! What honour and glory He has bestowed on you! He has made you partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Heaven is to be your eternal home, and you are to have a part and a share in the glory and happiness which is awaiting the saints before the throne of God.

He has delivered you from the power of darkness, and translated you into the kingdom of His dear Son. The devil has no more claim upon you, he is no longer your master, but the Lord Jesus Christ is your kind and merciful King who has established His throne in your hearts.

And in your dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ you have everything, everything to make your happiness complete. In Him you have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Not a single sin does God lay to your charge, but all your transgressions have been forgiven because your Saviour Jesus has died and shed His precious blood for you.

What more, then, do you need to make your happiness complete? Where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation. *“God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”*³

Do you not owe thanks to your God for all the spiritual blessings which He has bestowed on you in the past Church-Year, that your sins have been forgiven, that His grace did not depart from you, that you have been kept in the faith, that you have been edified by His Word, that you were comforted in your afflictions, and in short, that you have been kept in the narrow way that leads to eternal life? Yes, we certainly do owe our thanks to God!

2. Our Prayer.

Still, we have not only things to thank for as we review the past at the end of the Church-Year, but we also have things to pray for as we look to the future. Our prayer at the end of the Church year is the second part of our meditation.

What is it that we must pray for on this day? In general we must pray to God that He would not punish the world by taking away from the children of men His pure Word and Sacraments.

There always has been a Church of God on this earth, a body of true believers, but there have been times in which the Word of God was scarce in the lands, when darkness and superstition prevailed almost everywhere, and the children of God were few.

Does it not seem as though we are entering upon an era of scarcity and famine of such a character? Has not the Word of God been ruthlessly cast aside by many who, nevertheless, call themselves Christians?

Is not a shallow morality proclaimed in place of the Gospel, by men who call themselves preachers of the Gospel? Is not the divine inspiration of the Bible denied in our days by prominent theologians?

O how necessary for us to pray that the light of God's Word be not extinguished, and the whole world again be shrouded in darkness as it was in the time of the Middle Ages, and before Luther!

And let us pray particularly for our own congregation that in doctrine and in practice we may not deviate from the truth of the Word of the Gospel. May we not easily be drawn into the universal current of laxity, of indifferentism, and carelessness?

Let us pray to God, then, that He would guard and keep us, that we may retain God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure, and that we may never yield to practices which do not agree with the doctrines which we profess.

Still, we must not only pray for the spiritual welfare of our own congregation and of the Church at large, but every one must also pray for his own person that God would confer upon him His spiritual blessings in the coming Church-Year.

These are the same blessings which St. Paul desired for the Colossians when he says in our text, "⁹ *For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;* ¹⁰ *that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;* ¹¹ *strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy.*"

Pray to God, then, on this day, my dear Christian friends, that He would fill you more and more with the knowledge of His will, that He would open your

understanding more and more, that you might see wondrous things of His Law, that in the new Church-Year you may increase in divine wisdom and better comprehend the plan of salvation.

With this prayer you must link the vow that you will be a faithful attendant at Divine Services and a diligent reader of your Bible, and that you will find out what is the will of God.

Pray to God that He would grant you His grace for the coming Church-Year, that you may walk worthy of His name, that you may lead a truly Christian life according to the rule of the Ten Commandments, and be fruitful in every good work, in love to the neighbour, and doing good wherever you can to others.

Pray to God that in the coming Church-Year He would strengthen you with His might, and enable you to stand firm and to remain steadfast in the faith, and to bear with patience all those trials, and temptations, and afflictions which may come upon you.

Pray to God that, if this should be the last Church-Year which you have finished upon this earth, He would graciously take you from this vale of tears unto Himself in heaven, when the time has come for you to depart this life.

Blessed is the person who ends the Church-Year with such sentiments, with thanks for the spiritual blessings in the past and with prayer for spiritual blessings in the future.

Let us conclude with this Scripture, Psalm 90:17, *let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands.* Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Colossians 1:5

² Psalm 119:105

³ Romans 8:32