

## **Bad Manners Of Ingratitude.**

Text: Acts 13:18

Suggested Hymns:

A: 564, 565, 567, 289, 570

T: 569, 563, 568, 293, 566

1) Israel was blessed but not thankful

2) We are also blessed

3) We are blessed with many freedoms but are we thankful

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 Acts 13:18, <sup>18</sup> *“Now for a time of about forty years [God] put up with their [manners] in the wilderness.* (NKJV)

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

Dear friends in Christ,

It is good manners to express thanks for favours received. It is bad manners not to do so. We are deeply grieved if we have been kind to people but they have not even had the decency to feel thankful and give expression to it in some form.

In our text God is complaining about the bad manners of the Israelites. Ingratitude was characteristic of Israel. It is divine grief rather than anger that is expressed by Isaiah when he cries to Israel in the opening chapter of his great prophetic book, <sup>2</sup> *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: “I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me; <sup>3</sup> The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master’s crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider.”*

The most notable Scriptural example of ingratitude is that of the ten lepers who had been healed. Only one of these returned to give thanks. It would perhaps be a mistake to make this a general proportion as if only one out of ten people were grateful. It is, however, an evidence of how common ingratitude is. Let us avoid bad manners and ingratitude. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Israel Was Blessed But Not Thankful**

God had done great things for Israel. He had chosen them *“above all the nations that are upon the earth.”*<sup>1</sup> From this people He raised up a great prophet and leader, Moses. From their race the Messiah was to be born. In marvellous ways God had lead them and protected them. Wonderfully He had delivered them from Egyptian bondage and made them a free people. He had fed them with manna, food from heaven.

*“Out of weakness [they] were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”*<sup>2</sup> God had brought them to Canaan, a land of milk and honey. God had revealed Himself in the greatness of His power and also in the wonders of His love and mercy. He had given them His law and also His exceedingly great and precious promises.

Therefore God could reasonably have expected that Israel would be a grateful people and that their mouths would be filled with prayers of thanksgiving and joyful hymns of praise. He could reasonably have expected that they would be a godly people, serving Him with gladness and giving Him willing obedience.

But, as a matter of fact, what God heard was mostly murmuring and complaining about the hardships of the way, about the monotony of the manna, and the lack of refreshing water. They wished themselves back in Egypt enjoying its flesh pots. They cried out against Moses. They cried out against God. They fell into grievous sins, idolatry and lust. How long-suffering it was upon the part of God to endure for forty years such manners from a people so blessed when He might have cast them off.

## **2. We Are Also Blessed**

Australia is blessed with great material wealth and many and valuable natural resources. The standard of living of people here is above that of many other nations. For this let us properly give thanks to God. God has not only provided our own needs, but given us such an abundance that we can help supply the needs of those less fortunate in other lands.

Today as we celebrate Harvest Thanksgiving, let us remember the promise that God has given us in Genesis 8:22, <sup>22</sup> *“While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease.”* During this last year God has again fulfilled His promise not to permit

seed-time and harvest-time to fail. We all have more than sufficient to eat and to drink.

God is the Giver of all, including the good land we live in. We read in Psalm 24:1, *The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.*

It is God who makes the land produce as we read in Psalm 65:9-11, <sup>9</sup> *You visit the earth and water it, You greatly enrich it; The river of God is full of water; You provide their grain, For so You have prepared it.* <sup>10</sup> *You water its ridges abundantly, You settle its furrows; You make it soft with showers, You bless its growth.* <sup>11</sup> *You crown the year with Your goodness, And Your paths drip with abundance.*

It is God who provides the harvest, whether it be the crops we have grown or that somebody else has planted and we buy the finished product. Our harvest maybe the harvest from our vegetable gardens. Harvest also includes the income we receive from the work we do, whether we are retired or not. Let us not forget the Government benefits we receive. These include the various pensions, child benefits, health benefits and the like. For all these things we are to give God thanks.

We must have bread to eat and water to drink. Hence we pray in the Lord's Prayer, *Give us this day our daily bread.* Therefore too, the Lord crowns the year with plenty. He provides the sunshine and the rain. We see the fields rich with golden grain in many parts of the country. The meadows and the hills are covered with sheep and cattle. People pick many fruits from the orchards and the delicious grapes from the vine. All these things are so because God has ordered things in this way and because He gives us His constant blessing.

Travel through the country, and you'll see one special place of storage after another erected on the farms of our Australian farmers, filled with grain of one kind or another. Look at the massive storage facilities of many other companies around the country. It is an almost unbelievable story of God's mercy and God's goodness to us from the material point of view.

And in this prosperity everybody is having a share. We have a welfare system that looks after everybody. Nobody needs to go hungry. In fact many people have it too good and don't appreciate the blessings they have, let alone

find the time to give thanks to God. Let this not be our error. Let us always give thanks to God.

Just listen to the first 3 verses of Psalm 136:1-3, <sup>1</sup> *Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.* <sup>2</sup> *Oh, give thanks to the God of gods! For His mercy endures forever.* <sup>3</sup> *Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords! For His mercy endures forever.*

### **3. We Are Blessed With Many Freedoms But Are We Thankful**

All this reminds us on this Harvest Thanksgiving Day of our own people! Our nation has been greatly blessed. What the Psalmist sang relative to Israel, we can also sing relative to Australia. *“He has not dealt thus with any nation.”*<sup>3</sup> Are we a grateful people? Are we thankful? Do we give God obedience? Sadly, the spirit of dissatisfaction fills the hearts of many people. Complaints and criticism fill the air.

Some people may complain that we have lost some of our freedoms. It is true, our freedom has been curtailed in recent years. We do not enjoy the same measure of freedom that our fathers did. But these are unusual times. These are days of world-wide tensions. Discipline, regulation, and limitation has become imperative.

However, there is still a vast difference between our country and many others where much freedom is lost. We still have governments which are elected by the people. It is still a free and unrestricted choice.

Let us not murmur and complain but rather on this Harvest Thanksgiving Day thank God for all the undeserved blessings that have been ours.

Truly, we are blessed with many freedoms - political, social, and religious. These are some of God’s greatest earthly gifts.

Let us thank God, as Lutherans, especially for the religious liberty that we, together with all of our fellow citizens, enjoy in our country. To worship God according to our free convictions and to be able without obstruction or hindrance to follow *“the faith once delivered to the saints”* and re-delivered to us by the great Reformer, Dr. Luther, is indeed a blessing for which we can never be sufficiently grateful.

If we would murmur and complain, let it be over ourselves, over the moral and spiritual status of our people. The founding fathers of our nation were a Christian, God-fearing people, and the immigrant founders of our church were likewise. They braved the dangers of sea travel and faced the hardships of the new land for the sake of their faith and their loyalty to their conscience.

For them religion was the supreme consideration, their Church the greatest entity in their life. Their lives were governed by the will of God; they were Christian men and women to the core. Sunday worship was their great delight and privilege. How is it with our people today?

Go over, in your mind, the people in your neighbourhood, among your acquaintances, and when you are shopping, how many go to church and are interested in the things of God? Only a small minority; you are most likely the exception. We have become to a great extent a godless nation, a pagan people. With this has also come moral degeneration and spiritual deadness. When men and women no longer have any regard for God, they soon lose their regard for their fellow man.

Honesty, justice, purity, and humility, these and other noble qualities, decline and die. Lust, oppression, selfishness, hardness, and harshness become the characteristic spirit of a people that forsake God. The rise of materialism in our times is one of its deplorable features and the cause of so much suffering and misery in the world. Not religion, but irreligion is the curse of the world.

And so our great prosperity has become a curse instead of a blessing, and men and women are using it to gratify their lusts according to their materialistic and pagan ideals. Not God, but the devil, gets most of it.

It is either selfishly hoarded or is selfishly used for pleasure and the glory of the worldly life. This spirit, and the life that it produces, is our worst enemy and threatens the perpetuity and welfare of our nation more than any foreign enemies, however dangerous they may be.

We are fast becoming our own worst enemy. The divinely inspired words of the ancient prophet of Israel applies also to our nation: ***“Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.”***<sup>4</sup> In fact, in a democracy, which is a government of the people, the religious character of the people is the most important asset for its welfare.

What is needed is the return to the one and only religion, the religion of Jesus Christ and His Gospel. It alone has the power to bring men and women to repentance as lost sinners, to faith in Christ, who shed His blood on the cross in atonement for their sins, and to change their hearts and lives.

We have that Christ and His Gospel in its truth and purity. The spirit of God has brought us to faith in Him. Our lives are linked in fellowship with God. We enjoy His divine comfort and grace and hope. This must be our chief note of thanksgiving as Christians. But is it? Do we show it in our lives? Do we appreciate the opportunity to attend Church Services and render some service for God and His Church? Do we thank and praise God for our spiritual blessings as children of God and members of His heavenly kingdom?

How little spiritual profit we show in our lives as the result of God's gracious ministry of Word and Sacrament! God surely has cause to say also about us, many years I have *put up with your [manners].*

May we pray to God to open our minds and hearts to realise how greatly we are blessed as citizens of our country, and as members of our Church and for the fruits of the earth.

Let us gladly render service to God in grateful appreciation of His goodness. Let us not only this day but every day thank God for all His blessings and use them with profit to ourselves and others.

God bestows them upon us *"purely out of fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in us, for all which it is our duty to thank and to praise, to serve and obey Him."* These words of Luther, known to us from the Catechism, express the true motive and true character of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving must include daily thanksgiving. Surely, it is only good manners to thank God for all His blessings. Amen.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 14:2

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 11:34

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 147:20

<sup>4</sup> Proverbs 14:34