

November 27, 2013
Thanksgiving Eve

Thanksgiving file
(Series C)

Psalm 107:1

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

LETTER OF T-H-A-N-K-S

Tonight, I would like to teach you a *Hebrew* word. It is the first word of our text. In the ancient world God's people were taught to say ... (Hebrew: *how-du*), which meant *give thanks*. This is our greatest service in the kingdom of God. When we see one another, imagine the possibilities by saying: *how-du* ... how-du you do? In other words, do you *give thanks* today – for me – for you – to God? Do you give thanks for the ability to give thanks? If we learned nothing else, this would be enough to last a whole lifetime! Professor of theology *Martin Luther* taught his students at Wittenberg this simple truth:

We cannot give God anything; for everything is already His, and all we have comes from Him. We can only give Him praise, thanks, and honor.

What Luther Says 4357:1353

In Latin the language of scholars, Luther would declare to his class:

Deo gratias. "To God be thanks!"

The first word is the key. In a letter written to a magistrate, Luther calls it his beautiful (*Latin: Confitemini*) which is translated: *give thanks*. This beautiful song expresses the gratitude of people who have been redeemed. The action word in the present tense acknowledges, owns up to, and reveals what Psalmist meant when he repeats the ancient (Hebrew: *how-du*), urging God's people to *give thanks*. In the context he gives four examples of those who have been redeemed ...

- Those who once were *lost* in the desert wilderness (v. 4)
- Those who were *prisoners* behind bars, locked in darkness and just existing, sitting in the shadow of death (v. 10)
- Those who were *foolish*, wasting away in their self-centered sinful ways (v. 17)
- Those who were travelers, pilgrims, like *sailors* who went down to the sea in ships (v. 23)

What's in your worship?

In Psalm 107:1 it is one Hebrew word ... *how-du*
In Luther's Latin class, it is a beautiful word ... *confitemini*
In simple English let the redeemed say so when they do ... *give thanks*

Tonight, let's learn not only how to say it, but live it as we listen to a --
LETTER OF T-H-A-N-K-S.

And as we *do*, may the Holy Spirit encourage us to remember *how*
the Lord has redeemed us to be his people.

I will begin with a few thoughts of *how-du* for each --
LETTER OF T-H-A-N-K-S.



T – TRUST

This is something we can never take for granted, because unlike our redemption it must be earned by listening, learning more than just each other's name, and loving one another for the sake of Christ. Trust enables us to behave the way we believe. Trust allows us to worship and work together as a community of faith. Trust is the way we *how-du*.

H – HOME

This is a special church that we call home. It is good to call this our parish family because this is a friendly, warm, and safe place to be. Anyone can build a church, but to make it a home it needs to have the love of God all over the place. This is our home. And for this unique blend of redeemed in Christ, we *how-du*.

A – ACCEPTANCE

We know the drill when the opposite takes over. Rejection and ridicule are not good. But when we feel the love of God embrace us through the spoken Word, when we see the water at the font wash away the sinful old Adam, when we taste the sacrificial body and blood of Christ in his real presence, we feel close to one another; it's a great *how-du*.

N – NOTES

I am grateful to you for encouragement. I appreciate the written notes that you have shared to strengthen and support my ministry. I am grateful for the musical notes some of you sing and a few have played with guitars, chimes, the pipe organ, and piano. I am a great fan of the kind words and thoughtful remarks spoken to me. Like anybody else, I like getting notes of that bring joy and encouragement. They make me smile and *how-du*.

K – KITCHEN

This is the home of the *third* sacrament – coffee and donuts. It's in the kitchen. Great stuff comes out of there from hard-working cooks and chefs in this parish family. It goes without saying, but I will say it, anyway – hospitality is a gift of the Holy Spirit; and that wonderful gift is served especially well in the kitchen when we *how-du*.

S – SANCTUARY

This is a beautiful *confitemini!* This house of refuge, place of worship is something that isn't seen everywhere. Look at it. Enjoy it. Treasure it. Support it. And remember the main reason we have it – to honor the Word and Sacraments. And for that we *how-du*.

This concludes one man's --

LETTER OF T-H-A-N-K-S.

Now it's your turn. For those of you with a letter, tell us something or someone that begins with your letter to *how-du* ... (allow for responses, then ...)

Our greatest service to God is living every day with a --

LETTER OF T-H-A-N-K-S.

Let' repeat the words of our text:

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

In Jesus' Name,

A M E N

Our worship continues now as we bring to the Lord our offerings.

Dr. Thomas Wm. Hirsch, Pastor

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