

Nov. 23, 2014 – 1 Timothy 2:1-8 (OT: Lamentations 3:22-26 Gospel: Luke 17:11-19)

Live a life of thanksgiving to God for your Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus.

Thanksgiving is just four days away. What do you have to be thankful for? It is easy to give thanks to God when things are going well, but it isn't always easy to be thankful when you face difficulties and challenges in your life.

The hymn *Now Thank We All Our God* (TLH 36) was written by Martin Rinckart in 1636. He experienced his fair share of hardship. He wrote the hymn during the horrors of the Thirty Year's War. He sacrificed all that he had to help the starving refugees to the point that he could barely provide food and clothing for his own family. He eventually was forced mortgaged his future income for several years.

The year after he wrote that hymn was the year of the great pestilence. His wife died in May. There were three other pastors in Eilenburg, but one left to avoid the plague and Martin had to bury the other two. As the only pastor left he conducted funeral services for as many as 40 to 50 people a day. He buried over 4,000 people. At the end of the year so many were dying that they had to be buried in trenches without services.

Surrounded by all this suffering and death He continued to write hymns that expressed the same thankfulness and trust in God we see in *Now Thank We All Our God*.

Compared to what Martin Rinckart experienced, our lives are easy. But how often do we fail to be thankful to God for all things. In verse 1 of our text we are told to give thanks "*for all men*" – literally "for all people". Is there anyone in your life for whom you find it difficult to be thankful? We probably all can think of someone who has made our life difficult or has tried our patience. Are you thankful for them?

Verse 2 goes on to talk about "*kings and all who are in authority*". Isn't it so much easier to complain about our elected leaders than to give thanks for them? But that is what God here tells us to do.

So how do we become thankful? It isn't by comparing our lives to someone less fortunate so we can say, "Thank you God that I don't have it as bad as that person." It isn't by finding someone who experienced great hardship and remained thankful to be a role model, like Martin Rinckart.

The way to be thankful is to look at the reason we have to be thankful. It's the same reason Martin had. It is found in v. 5, we can be thankful "*for there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.*"

If you have a credit card it came with an credit card agreement. In the unlikely event that you actually read all the small print, you may have found a clause that says that in the case of a dispute you agree to enter into arbitration rather than going to court. This most often happens when you are unable or unwilling to pay what you owe.

Arbitration involves a neutral third party who acts as arbiter or mediator. This person hears the arguments from both sides, looks at the evidence, and issues a decision. It is a more streamlined process than going to court. A good mediator will seek to find an agreement that is beneficial for both parties.

We need a good mediator. We are all born into debt. We each have inherited it from our forefather Adam. Romans 5:19 says: "*by one man's disobedience many were made sinners.*" And it is a debt we cannot repay. Each day we only dig ourselves deeper by failing to be perfectly obedient

to God. If we were to go to court before God, we would be justly condemned to everlasting punishment (see Matthew 25:46).

But we have that good Mediator between God and us: the Man Christ Jesus. He found a solution that satisfied our debt to God and saves us from condemnation. He not only found the solution, but He provided the solution as well! As v. 6 says: He “*gave Himself a ransom for all.*” The Mediator paid your debt!

In the Old Testament God setup a system of sacrifices in which the blood of bulls and goats pointed forward to the ransom our Mediator would provide. Hebrews 9:13-15 tells us: “*For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*”

Jesus lived a perfect, debt-free life. He laid down that life and died on the cross to pay for your sins and to take away your debt to God. You no longer need to fear condemnation and God’s wrath when you appear before God in judgment. Your account has been wiped clean and you are reconciled to God. You have an eternal inheritance waiting for you free from all liens and unencumbered by any sin.

Jesus not only died, but He rose again and lives to be your Mediator. As God who became man, He can sympathize with everything you are going through. If you do sin, He is your advocate with God who forgives your sin because of His ransom. You are no longer under the law that condemns but under grace – God’s undeserved favor – because of Jesus’ mediation.

This is *the* reason we have to be thankful! All the blessings we have from God are based on our one Mediator and the ransom He paid. We become thankful not by looking at our circumstances or comparing our lives to the lives of others, but by looking at Jesus and what He has done for us. Without Him, our lives are meaningless, no matter how good they may be.

Now that we have seen what we have to be thankful for, how do we give thanks to God? Our text gives us a number of ways in which we can show our thanks.

Verse 1 and verse 8 both talk about prayer. We can express our thanks to God directly in prayer, but here the focus is on praying for others. We are to make “*supplications, prayers, intercessions*” and give thanks for all people. We show our thanks to God by praying for others.

For what do we pray? “Supplications, prayers, and intercessions” can cover a lot of things. One of the main themes in this passage is salvation. Verse 4 tells us that God “*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*”

This is a comfort for us, as it shows us what God wants for us – and what Christ has accomplished for us. It also shows what God wants for all those for whom we can pray. We pray for those who do not know the truth of Christ that they come to that knowledge and be saved. We pray for those who know and trust in Jesus’ redemption that God would preserve them in that faith and that they would grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Verse 2 specifically mentions “*all who are in authority.*” We are to pray for them as well – not only that they would be saved, but that they will rule in such a way so that “*we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.*”

We live in a country where we can freely meet to worship God and study His word. That is a blessing for which we should be thankful. And we can show our thanks by praying that those in authority would continue to preserve this freedom.

Verse 2 talks about our manner of life. We thank God by leading “*a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.*” It is important to remember that doing this is not a way for us to make ourselves right with God or earn His favor. Our Mediator has already done that. Our lives are a way for us to express our thanks for the undeserved favor and salvation we already have because of what Christ Jesus has done for us.

The fact that Jesus has paid our debt doesn’t mean that we can go out and “live it up”. We should not continue to incur more debt, but in thanks seek to live godly and reverent lives through the Holy Spirit whom Jesus has sent to us. “*For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior*” (v. 3).

Verse 8 warns us against wrath. It also warns against doubting. While the word used here can refer to doubt and it is certainly true that God wants us to pray and not doubt (see James 1:6, Mark 11:24), this word more often refers to “disputing”. I think that is a better translation here, as it is associated with “wrath”. We are not to be angry and argue with one another, but rather pray for one another and live a life of peace and quiet. This honors God and expresses our thanks to Him for what He has done.

Because God “*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth,*” He wants us not only to pray that others would come to the truth but also that we testify “*in due time*” to the truth that Christ Jesus “*gave Himself as a ransom for all*”. Paul spent the remainder of His life doing just that, as he mentions in verse 7. We are not sent directly by Christ as an apostle, but He still sends us out to be His witnesses and teach others “*in faith and truth.*” Fulfilling His great commission is another way we express our thanks to Him. And teaching others what God has done for them leads them to give thanks to God as well.

You do have a lot for which to be thankful! God has given you the one perfect Mediator who has given Himself as the ransom for all: the Man Christ Jesus. May your thanksgiving not be limited to one special day a year, but may you live a life of prayerful thanks in all godliness and reverence to the praise of the glory of His grace. Amen.

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