

A Land in Which You Will Lack Nothing

Thanksgiving 201

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Deut. 8:1-10

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Take a look at my coat. I've had this coat for only a few years—I forget just how many. I received it from my mom and dad while I was attending Seminary. I have enjoyed having it, but sadly, as you can see, the cuffs and waistband are wearing out into pieces. That's just the way things go here in this world, isn't it? No matter how much you may love an item or how much care you show it or how much you try to protect it, it will eventually wear out or get ruined.

Has this always been the case? Well, some of you are probably already thinking no, nothing would have worn out in the Garden of Eden prior to the fall, and that's true. But what about after the fall? Have any items lasted for all time without damage? No, if you've lived here for long enough, you know that nothing lasts forever, and that nothing can go for too long without breaking down—except perhaps at the time our Old Testament text mentioned.

In Deuteronomy, Moses is commanded by God to speak to the Israelites His commands concerning worship. They are to be careful to do “(t)he whole commandment that (God) command(ed) them (that day)”—in other words, all the commandments, which are rightly summarized in the one command to Love God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind, which, if done, would include Loving your neighbor as yourself.

God commands the Israelites to “remember the whole way that the Lord (their) God (had) led (them those) forty years in the wilderness.” They are to teach and remember His commands so that they “may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the Lord swore to give to (their) fathers.”

Throughout those forty years God tested the Israelites to know what was in their hearts. He also let them hunger before feeding them manna, which neither they nor their fathers had known. God did this so that the Israelites “might...know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” And that is still the case today. Food is necessary for the body, but the Scriptures have told us that God has made them both—you and the food you eat, and that it is good for us to recognize that He made us. But not just recognize it, be thankful for it. Tonight, tomorrow, and indeed, all year round we should be thankful for all that the Lord has made, both us and the food that we need in this body and life, and that He still takes care of us.

The Lord continues His word to the Israelites: “Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years.” Once again, God has revealed that He is the provider of all that is needed—not just

for the Israelites, but also for us. He did not let the Israelites' clothes wear out or even let their feet swell during forty years of wandering. And God knows what we need, and it is good for us to realize that fact.

“For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land...a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing...and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.”

As our text reminds us, God has given us everything we need in this life, and the promise of life everlasting, life in a land in which we will lack nothing. Do you thank God for all that He does for you? Or do you go about swaggering or boasting or bragging as though you had “life, riches, power, honor, and such things of (yourself) (BoC, p.433)”? Granted maybe you don't literally swagger or boast, but if you do not give God the glory and the thanksgiving for what He has given to you, it is as though you were saying that you had these things of yourself, of your own works. That's what Luther says in the First Article of the Large Catechism. And ultimately that is the case. You either serve God, or you serve yourself or some other created thing, which is not even a god.

The one true God freely gives you what you need and a life to come out of Fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit on your part. That's just who God is, He is love. He is merciful. He sent His own Son to die in your place for your sins—all that you have done against Him, including being thankless—and for His sake, continues to give you all that you need for not only this body and life, but also a whole new body and life to come.

Throughout Scripture, we find examples of things which start off lesser and then the greater is revealed. The Old Testament covenant is replaced by the greater New Testament one. The nation of Israel who were called to be God's chosen people are replaced by the single Israel, Christ Jesus, who does all that the Israelite nation failed to do. And so it is with God's gifts to us here and now. God has given us food and clothing in this life, food which doesn't fill and clothing which, like my coat, wears out and needs to be replaced. But for the sake of Jesus, His death and resurrection, God has already told you that He has something greater in mind for these things as well. He has prepared the robe of Christ's righteousness for you to wear, and He has promised a land in which you will lack nothing, and where nothing ever wears out. For all this, it is our duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. In Jesus' Name. Amen.