Dear Friends:

What does it mean to be blessed?

There are at least three ways in which we can be blessed. First, a blessing might be a windfall, or unexpected financial gain—especially in a time of need. A young, struggling family  might receive a gift of money from a relative that helps alleviate their economic burdens.  Second, a blessing could come as a “salvation” experience, as when a person is cured of a serious illness like cancer. Third, a blessing might take the form of a person, such as a parent or teacher, whose wisdom and experience enrich us.

As Christians, we would say that these blessings come from God, since God is the giver of all good things. But the material blessings like those just mentioned are not the only or the greatest blessings that we can receive from God. Financial assistance, renewed health, and the attainment of wisdom are all earthly blessings that serve us in this life only.  In Jesus Christ, God has given us blessings that are for the life to come and are *eternal*.

Specifically, I mean the blessings of salvation—the forgiveness and mercy that God grants us unworthy sinners so that we can enjoy eternal life now. As it happens, the blessings of salvation in Jesus Christ come to us through our Sunday worship service or “liturgy.”

First of all, when God’s Word is proclaimed, we are made aware of our sin, brokenness, and unworthiness before God. That is, God’s Word confronts us with the truth about ourselves and calls us to repentance and the amendment of life. Most importantly, God’s Word in scripture readings and preaching announces God’s forgiving mercy. Those who repent of sin are assured that God will receive them into his presence such that they can live with him forever as his children.

Second, the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper confirms the promises of the Word by giving us fellowship  with the very One who died to take away our sins. When we eat the bread and drink the cup of wine in faith, we receive the forgiveness and eternal life that Jesus won for us by his suffering and death on the cross. In a sense, the blessings announced by the Word are fulfilled in the Super, which is why our service begins with the Word (scripture readings, sermon) and proceeds to the Supper.

Thus the Sunday liturgy blesses us through Word and Sacrament—the gifts that grant us joy and peace amid our earthly struggles, as well as the hope of eternal life in God’s kingdom. These are the greatest blessings of all because they meet our deepest needs and are ours forever.

As we look to Thanksgiving, let us not only be thankful for the blessings of the earth (food and clothing, work and family)—let us also give thanks for the blessings that are for the life to come.

Yours in Christ,

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