Text: Deut 8:1-10

**Introduction**

Thanksgiving is always my favorite holiday. I realize this might be a gender thing. Much of the responsibility for the rituals of the day tend to fall on the women. Thank you to those who bear the load. It is a day that even in its rituals, which are mostly about food, are non-demanding. Only an ogre would complain about speaking with family, eating pumpkin pie and watching football while falling asleep. The meal is bigger than normal initially, but you eat it for the next two days. Many other holidays seem filled with a sense of the law. You must do this, and if you fail, you are a failure. Thanksgiving has a larger measure of grace. Paradoxically the non-specifically- religious Thanksgiving feels more in tune with the gospel, a proper response to grace given.

**Common Grace**

Deuteronomy as a book is the 2nd giving of the covenant. It is what Moses did after the 40 years in the wilderness right before Israel crossed the Jordan to take possession of the promised land. And in the passage called out for Days of Thanksgiving, God points at two level of his providence.

The first level of God’s providence is what Luther captured in his explanation to the first article of the creed. “He gives me my clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land animals and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.”

Even though Israel was wandering the wilderness, God gave them the manna and the quail. Their clothing did not wear out and their feet did not swell. Even though we walk through the wilderness of a fallen world, God continues to provide everything that we need to support this life. And this common grace is given to all. The rain falls on the just and the unjust alike. Thanksgiving as a purely secular holiday is still a common good. Because we all receive the harvest that God’s good creation provides abundantly.

**Saving Grace**

But the point of common grace is not that we cling to this fallen world. God’s providence under that first article of the creed is given so that we might recognize “that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

God would bring Israel into the promised land. “A land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing…you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the food land he has given you.” And it is in that last phrase that is the test.

The first thing to recognize is that the land does provide, but that our sin often gets in the way. Famine is never about not enough food, it is always about fallen political systems that won’t share the abundance. And even with good systems, the iron and copper of the hills still needs to be dug out. Vines need dressing and bees kept. God’s providence invites us into tending the garden with him. And sometimes we just don’t feel like it.

But this is the promised land that God wishes to lead us into. One where the King is just and our bodies do not wear out. This is the providence of the second and third articles. We don’t live by bread alone, but the Father and sent his son as the just King. He sits at the right hand of God…from whence he will come to judge. And we live into the promise of the resurrection.

We all receive the grace of the first article. But the test is: are we satisfied with mere bread. When we ask for our daily bread, do we take it and leave like the nine healed, or do we return in thanks.

“God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to recognize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.” That’s Luther’s explanation to the Lord’s prayer petition. “You shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord” is the phrase in Deuteronomy. Do we recognize that God’s providence of bread, which itself is worthy of thanks, is but the start of his providence.

Not only has he given us this good land, he has given us a much better one. A heavenly one. An inheritance in the world to come when he remakes all things new.

We give thanks for all of God’s gifts. Those that support this body and life. Our daily bread. And for those that “keep us in his grace, and free us from all ills, in this world and the next.” Amen