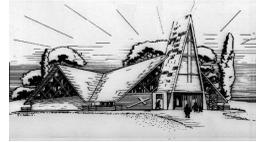




Free Evangelical Lutheran  
Synod in South Africa

## Sermon - Thanksgiving Sunday (Proper 20C)

Thanksgiving for all people!



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

### The Word of God for this Sermon is written in 1 Timothy 2,1-15:

- **ESV 1** First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,
  - **2** for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.
  - **3** This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,
  - **4** who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
  - **5** For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,
  - **6** who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.
  - **7** For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle ( I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.
  - **8** I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;
  - **9** likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire,
  - **10** but with what is proper for women who profess godliness- with good works.
  - **11** Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness.
  - **12** I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.
  - **13** For Adam was formed first, then Eve;
  - **14** and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.
  - **15** Yet she will be saved through childbearing- if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.
- *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts and create in us a right heart that thanks You for all people and for being our Saviour in both soul and body! Amen.*

• **Dear Congregation in Christ!**

- We talked about it when we spoke about the call for mercy in the biblical ancient liturgy: “Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy” which the Body of Christ calls out to God Sunday for Sunday so that He will make everything right which is wrong, in the whole world, concerning all people! And from earliest times this cry for mercy stuck to the beginning of the service, because here Paul commands it [1-2a]: “*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people*”. As of first importance this is what we as members of Christ’s Body should do: pray for all people and give thanks for all people, even “*for kings and all who are in high positions*”.
- Let us remember who the government was at the time of Paul! Were they Christian? Definitely not. That only came with emperor Constantine some 300 years later!
- So, why the urgency, for us as Christians to intercede for all these people, who sometimes are our enemies as Christians? What does the church have to do with the state?
- The Body of Christ and the government! What is the right relationship between these two governances of God? One thing is certain: God governs both, the Church and the State. It is true that satan, the world and our old self try to destroy God’s good governance. There is no doubt about it. And they are quite successful. That is also something we know by experience! Nevertheless, let us always keep in mind that God still governs the world! He has the final say over all people!
- Through the state departments God governs the world by the Word of His Law. Ultimately His Ten Commandments need to be enforced so that violence and corruption can be curbed so that citizens can lead a peaceful and quiet life!
- It is quite significant, that in God’s commandments He does not focus on my rights, but focuses on what is prohibited, what I am not allowed to do and what I need to do to love my neighbours!
- It is not about protecting my rights in the first place. I am sternly addressed by His Law to make sure that I comply with the prohibitions and duties concerning my neighbour!
- This is where there might be a problem with the use of the human rights. The mode of rather stating the individuals rights encourages misuse and abuse of these rights! It tends to reinforce the me-culture!

- But, that is what one can expect of the world! A world which even refuses to accept the fact of God's existence cannot be wise. It will dwell in darkness!
- This makes, what Paul admonishes us to do, even more unique! For these people and these governments who are trying to feel their way in darkness we need to pray and even give thanks! The reason being, God works through these people and any structures still intact to combat total chaos on earth. It will never be good and even close to perfect, but nevertheless as long as there is still some order, we can be thankful! And we are still living in relatively quiet and peaceful times in South Africa! Thanks be to God!
- And as we pray for them and give thanks for them our attitude towards the people in government changes! It changes from hate to a sober-minded kind of agape love! These are people whom God wants to save! Think of your worst political enemy and realise, this man or woman God wants to save. He hasn't given up on him or her yet. Neither should we!
- **Firstly** pray and give thanks, not criticize first and then pray for them. No. **Firstly** pray for them and give thanks. One reason more to stick with the order of service that has come down to us through the generations. It is spot on with this. We have been doing this all along maybe without knowing. Now we know. Lord have mercy- Kyrie eleison- at the beginning of the service does exactly this! Think of all people, each Sunday. Pray and give thanks for all people each Sunday and your hatred against anyone of them will be curbed!
- In the other domain that God governs, the Body of Christ, we know that He governs through Christ, who is our Saviour! That is, Law and Gospel are preached in the church. The main purpose of preaching both the Law and the Gospel is that all people are saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth.
- We know that the preaching of the Law has a different role to play than the Gospel, in that it drives us towards Christ's mercy. It cuts us off from any escape. We are like the sheep stuck in the bush. It kills our old self, so that we long for the Father's help. As our shepherd carries us back to the Father He comes and restores our sonship by His mercy and compassion for us. This act of mercy happens as we hear God's Word of Grace, "your sins are forgiven", 'take, eat the true body of Christ given for you' and 'take, drink, the true blood of Christ shed for you'".
- The Church needs the good governance of the state so that we can live a

peaceful and quiet life. God says, this is good. There is a specific reason for Him to say, 'this is good', namely He desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the Truth! The church needs the peaceful framework maintained by the government to operate in effectively. You cannot have a Divine Service if there is war and all people are shooting each other!

• Where the Law of God is enforced by the government and where the Body of Christ is able to teach the Truth of God's Word in both Law and Gospel the Word of the Cross is the overall hidden winner! The Word of the Cross is the power that saves people, that enlightens them and switches a new light on in their lives so that they see and realise the mercy of the Father and then also come to realise some of the depth of their own sinfulness!

• We have to realise that although God never sanctifies sin nor blesses evil in His mercy He does create the space and time for the Word of Salvation to reach peoples ears and hearts. To be able to do this He is patient with sinners and their sins. He doesn't judge them straight away. He gives them a whole life to come to the knowledge of truth. His patience and Truth are concrete. Patience and Truth have become a person: Christ Jesus! Salvation through Him is preached, is in fact handed out to each and everyone. But hearts of humans are hard as stone. Therefore it might take a lifetime, and sometimes people die still rejecting Jesus. Then it will be too late.

• We see that it is the mercy of God in person who inspires us to pray and cry out for all people and make us truly thankful for them! The Lord wants all to be saved. He has saved us! We have His name, we are united with Christ and we hear Him. He wants to use us to reach out to others. Jesus intercedes for us. He looks after us, so that we can bring all those outside the church before God! By praying for them and giving thanks for them we remind God about them and we ask on their behalf that He would have mercy on them too.

• Lord have mercy on all people! Thanks be to God for all people! Amen.

• *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.*

**Amen.** (<sup>ESV</sup> Eph 3,20-21).