

Sermon Deuteronomy 8 1 11 Thanksgiving Sunday 26th S of Pent Series B

Sermon: 26th Sunday after Pentecost – Thanksgiving Sunday

Text: Deuteronomy 8:1-11 (vv.10, 11)

Theme: Praise the Lord and do not forget Him!

Goal: Remembering all the goodness received from God, we worship Him with thanksgiving and serve our neighbour

Dear Friends,

Introduction: My cousin and his wife, who visited us for two weeks, were greatly impressed with South Africa. They were amazed seeing the several types of vine around Cape Town, the huge fruit orchards, the wheat fields just being harvested on the way to Hermanus, the nice and prosperous city, the friendly people... They have travelled a lot around the world, but this city was put first among many items compared to others.

I know that “not all that shines is gold” and that there is much dust under the carpet; but we cannot deny that this is a blessed country. Many of the pioneers and our forefathers were religious people and they built nice and big churches to worship God and to come together to say Thank You. What about the current generation who are enjoying the result of the hard work and efforts of the past?

I – Moses recounting the blessings received

In this passage (and in this book) Moses is addressing the children of Israel for the last time. He is about to die and he is recounting all the good things that God has done for them...Moses places thanksgiving in the centre of their life. (Phil Brandt, Thanksgiving 2013). God had delivered them from the slavery in Egypt; God had given them bread and water during the 40 years they were wandering through the desert. *He had repeatedly shown them that they were not able to provide for themselves, not even for the basic level of food* (ABC 224). And now they

are about to enter the Promised Land. A new life had been given to them by God, and a new chapter of this new life was about to begin in the Promised Land.

II – Moses appealing them not to forget this

Many good features were waiting for them in the new land: stability, prosperity, good land and crops, plenty of food, good houses... vine and wheat, cows and sheep, iron and cooper... Moses appeals to them not to forget that all these blessings come from God, who had delivered them and had brought them so far.

When they forget the goodness of God to them, they first will stop giving thanks, but other things will follow that. They will cease to keep the commandments of God... Thus, when Moses speaks of them forgetting the goodness and God and thus failing to keep the commandments, he is saying that they will stop coming to the temple to be forgiven of their sins. (Phil Brandt, *ibid*).

That is the highlight in this speech of Moses. Following their riches, enjoying their prosperity, running after more and more, they wouldn't have time and heart to come to God's house and say: *Thank You, my Lord; I know that I'm not perfect and that I depend only on Your favour for what I am and for what I have; I bring my thanksgiving offering and my sacrifice to you; forgive my sins by your mercy...*

III – What does Thanksgiving mean for us?

It is all bound together: Our life, our faith, our goods, our heart, our attitude, our thanksgiving... We cannot make several boxes and say: This is mine; this belongs to God; this belongs to my family... We are a unit of body and soul, and God redeemed us through Christ as we are. He didn't redeem our souls only. God redeemed **us**, our body and soul and whatever we are and have, to worship Him, to rely on

Him, and to serve Him and our neighbour. When we come to the Service, first of all we are served by God when He forgives our sins, when He speaks tenderly to our heart through His Word, and when He nourishes us by the body and blood of our Lord Jesus. Only because of God's saving acts through Jesus Christ for us is that we can serve Him with our hymns, prayers and thanksgiving offerings. The spiritual blessings are more important than the physical blessings, such as the daily bread, health, our car, our house, peace, and so on. But, I will say again, this is all one unit, one package: God takes care of our body and of our souls, and we give thanks to Him for everything.

Conclusion: We are going to have our brainstorming meeting after this Service. It was planned so: We will remember the blessings we have received during the past years, and will discuss what **each of us** can do in thanksgiving to God, and what we can do **as a community together** for the glory of God's Kingdom on earth. As we have preached on Stewardship since June, each of us have to grow in the awareness that we are not owners, but we are God's stewards, managing our life, our time, our skills, our goods in the best way according to God's will. It is not just a matter of duty, but it is a matter of a thankful heart, like the Samaritan leper who came back to worship and to give thanks to Jesus. He was not motivated by the Law (I have to!!!), but he was motivated by faith, by love for what God had done for him. This is a true thankful heart. We have to be responsible for what we are called to do; but not just as a "must", but with a thankful heart.

God bless our church and our meeting, giving us goodwill and love to acknowledge His blessings through Jesus Christ and to serve Him and our neighbour with thanksgiving. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town 22 November 2015