

Sermon followed by Service

Thanksgiving 2025

Psalm 103:1-5

Do you have one of those drawers? One of those drawers filled with stuff, stuff you don't use, but just can't throw away? Maybe it's not a drawer, maybe it's a box. Maybe it's not a box, maybe it's a box for each season of the year - decorations you don't use, but you can't throw away. Or maybe it's a box for each season of your life - a box from grade school, a box from high school, a box of college things, a box of treasures from your first born, a box of treasures from your second born, a box of treasures ... you get the idea. Or maybe not just a box or boxes, maybe you have a room, a basement, a storage unit

When I see my boxes I wonder, "Why?" "Why have I kept this? Why did I even get this in the first place?" Watching other people go through their boxes, it's easy to get worked up: "Why are you saving that?" Today as we think about our boxes and drawers and rooms - instead of getting worked up or overwhelmed - we get to put away the fears and the guilt that go with those boxes; we get to put away the anger and jealousy that go with those boxes. Instead, we get to focus on this -

God hasn't left us empty-handed. In those boxes we see: God has met our needs, and more. God has given us more than we need. We haven't had to live with bare walls or bare bottoms. Most of us have more clothes and more decorations than we know what to do with. We haven't had to live with empty closets and empty pantries and empty medicine cabinets. At least not for long. When the closets or pantries or cabinets were empty, God got us through those times. He's met our needs, and more. God didn't leave us empty-handed.

And he hasn't left us empty-hearted either. What else do we get to see in those boxes and drawers? Pictures, pictures of people God gave us. Gifts from family and friends God gave us. Reminders of happy times for our hearts, and some reminders of sad times for our hearts. As we go through our drawers and boxes we see in every stage of our life God has given us people for our hearts, people to love and people to love us. They haven't all been perfect; some may have hurt us; our memories may not all be happy. But God hasn't left us ... he doesn't leave us empty-hearted. Again and again he gives us people to love.

And again and again he gives us his love. Thinking of what's in my boxes I'm reminded of times I wasn't so loveable. Or maybe I should say I'm reminded of times I wasn't at all loveable. Times I made life hard for my parents; times I made love hard for God. But what did God do? What does God do? Instead of digging around in the memories of my sin ... instead of digging around in the memories of our sins ... God goes

through his memory book and he sees you with Jesus. He sees you baptized with Jesus, covered with Jesus, forgiven with Jesus. Those times we made bad memories, the ways we made love hard for God, Jesus took those times and ways ... he took our guilt to the cross and paid the price. With Jesus God doesn't see the sin of your past; he doesn't hold on to your guilt. He sees you forgiven and right. He sees you in his memory book, he points to you, and says to you: "You are my son, my daughter, whom I love; with you I am well-pleased."

Those boxes and drawers with stuff from our past, what's our biggest problem with them? They're in the way, aren't they? It may be that God is blessing us with so much that we don't have room for it all. It may be that God is taking care of us as we enter a new stage in life and God is taking care of us with a smaller house, a smaller apartment, a smaller home. Either way, what is true? God is taking care of us. He's giving us what we need ... he's giving us more than what we need for today.

So what do we do? When we don't have room, when things need to go, we might grouch. We might mourn and grieve. God has blessed us with some wonderful things, some wonderful memories. But we don't make our heart's home in the stuff and memories of the past. We thank God for yesterday, and we thank God for the way he is blessing us today.

How do we do that? Instead of living as hoarders - "I want it. I gotta have it. It's mine. I'm going to keep it. Nobody else can have it." Instead of living like God can't be trusted to bless us ... instead of living like God won't ever bless us again, we thank God by living with his heart, by living as people who share the blessings of God. How? Perhaps instead of just junking the things we don't want or need any more, we share them so someone else can be blessed with them. Perhaps instead of eating through our food budget at the restaurant, we eat in and use what we save to help fill someone's empty pantry. Perhaps instead of trying to keep up with our neighbor's lifestyle, we follow our God's giving-style so more and more people can know - "We are blessed by God!" When we don't have room for all we have ... when it's time to share God's blessing, we get to remember -

Psalm 103

- 1 Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
- 2 Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Some of you may know that Lisa and I are in the middle of a basement repair project, a project having us move an awful lot of stuff we really don't want to deal with. But in all the stuff, we find some treasures - grandpa's devotion book, worn and tattered - grandma's old German hymnal - worn with some notes of favorites stuck between the

pages - baptism certificates from an aunt and uncle I never met; God took them home before my dad was born - a huge picture of Martin Luther from the late 1800s when my grandpa's grandparents helped found their Lutheran church in Cedarburg. God has blessed me to be part of a family that has been passing Jesus along, one generation to another - a family that's not stuck in this world, but a family looking ahead to heaven.

As we look through our stuff from the past, we get to remember we have an even better tomorrow coming - we get to wake up with Jesus. So, let me suggest this - as you save up stuff from your past, stuff for others to go through after you, save up some stuff for them, save up stuff that shows you know you have a better tomorrow coming, stuff that shows you know - you get to wake up with Jesus. Stuff that says -

Psalm 103

- 1 Praise the LORD, O my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
- 2 Praise the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—
- 3 who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
- 4 who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
- 5 who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
A Family Connecting in Christ



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WELCOME TO ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

To Our Guests

- We pray that you receive a warm welcome and are blessed by the message of God's Word in our lessons and hymns. If you have questions, please ask!
- Our service is designed to focus us on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit does that by exposing our need for Christ and by showing us the wonders of God's grace in Christ – forgiveness and peace, help, and hope for life in this world, and life forever with God in heaven.
- Please join us after Sunday service for fellowship and Family Bible Hour.

Our Communion Practice

We practice close communion, the Biblical and ancient practice of the church. We invite our congregation members and visitors from sister WELS or ELS congregations to join us, but ask Christians from other denominations to kindly respect our practice. Further explanation is in the pew racks or from our pastor.

We Care about Your Children

- We love to have children with us in worship. Children's "church bags" (with paper, colors, and Bible story books) are available in the Narthex Gathering Area.
- If your children are crying loudly, our nursery, Gathering Area (back of church), and downstairs Fellowship Hall are audio-equipped for you and your young children. When your children are ready, come back so we can worship together.

We Care about Your Special Needs

- **Large Print** Service Folders are available from an usher.
- **Hearing Assistance** for those with hearing aids is provided through our Hearing Loop or personal hearing devices available at the "sound table."
- A **wheelchair lift** is available for your assistance; please ask an usher.



Our Facilities

Restrooms are in our Fellowship Hall, downstairs and to the right of the kitchen.

Our Ministry

St. John offers an excellent preschool-8th grade school program. We are members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) - www.wels.net.

THANKSGIVING 2025

For Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow... We Give Thanks!

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... it's easy to get stuck on NOW. Unless things are good right NOW, it can be hard to give thanks. And when things are good right now, we can feel too busy to give thanks.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ...we consider NOW and we also look back to yesterday and look forward to tomorrow and find that God is filling our lives with reason to give thanks.

*Praise the LORD, O my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
Praise the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—
who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. (Psalm 103:1-5)*

OPENING HYMN

"Let All Things Now Living"

Hymn 507



1 Let all things now liv - ing a song of thanks - giv - ing to
2 His law he en - forc - es; the stars in their cours - es and



God the Cre - a - tor tri - um-phantly raise, who fash - ioned and
sun in its or - bit o - be - dient - ly shine. The hills and the

made us, pro - tect - ed and stayed us, who still guides us
 moun-tains, the riv - ers and foun-tains, the deeps of the

on to the end of our days. God's ban - ners are o'er us; his
 o - cean pro - claim him di - vine. We, too, should be voic-ing our

light goes be - fore us, a pil - lar of fire shin-ing forth in the
 love and re - joic - ing. With glad ad - o - ra - tion a song let us

night, till shad - ows have van - ished and dark - ness is
 raise till all things now liv - ing u - nite in thanks -

ban - ished, as for - ward we trav - el from light in - to light.
 giv - ing: "To God in the high - est, ho - san - na and praise!"

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 17:11-19

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

When he saw them he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he

said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

CONFESSION OF OUR SIN

P: It can be easy to join in the nine in forgetting to give thanks. We confess our place with the nine and ask our God's forgiveness.

P: O holy and merciful Father, you are the giver of all good things for this life and forever.

C: **We confess that we are unworthy of your love and blessing.**

P: On the hard days we forget your goodness.

C: **On the good days we forget *you* are the source of all good things.**

P: We focus on your blessings for this world

C: **and overlook your greater blessing for eternity.**

P: We focus on the gifts you give *to* us

C: **and overlook the gifts you want to give *through* us.**

P: Father, we don't deserve your love and blessing;

C: **but we appeal to your unfailing mercy and ask you to forgive us for Jesus' sake.**

HYMN

"Forgive Us, Lord, for Shallow Thankfulness"

Hymn 754



1 For - give us, Lord, for shal - low thank - ful - ness,
2 Teach us to thank you, Lord, for love and grace,
3 For - give us, Lord, for self - ish thanks and praise,
4 Teach us, O Lord, true thank - ful - ness di - vine,



for dull con - tent with warmth and shel - tered care,
for life and vi - sion, for a pur - pose clear,
for words that speak at var - i - ance with deeds;
that gives as Christ gave, nev - er count - ing cost,



for songs of praise for world - ly wealth - i - ness,
for Christ, your Son, and for each hu - man face
for - give our thanks for walk - ing pleas - ant ways,
that knows no bar - ri - er of "yours" and "mine,"



while of your rich - er gifts we're un - a - ware:
that shows your mes - sage ev - er new and near.
un - mind - ful of a bro - ken broth - er's needs:
as - sured that on - ly what's with - held is lost.

Forgive us, Lord, for feast that knows not fast,
for joy in things that meanwhile starve the soul,
for walls and wars that hide your mercies vast
and blur our vision of the kingdom goal:

Open our eyes to see your love's intent,
to know with mind and heart its depth and height;
let thankful days in loving labor spent
reflect the truly Christlike life and light.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF GOD'S GRACE

P: O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! He does not treat us as our sins deserve. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west so far has he removed our transgressions from us. In the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus, you are forgiven. In the plan and promise of our God, you are his children; he will bless you and take care of you; he will make all things work so that goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life and you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.



1 For the fruits of his cre - a - tion, thanks be to God.
 2 In the just re - ward of la - bor, God's will is done.
 3 For the har - vests of the Spir - it, thanks be to God.



For his gifts to ev - 'ry na - tion, thanks be to God.
 In the help we give our neigh - bor, God's will is done.
 For the good we all in - her - it, thanks be to God.



For the plow - ing, sow - ing, reap - ing, si - lent growth while we are
 In our world-wide task of car - ing for the hun - gry and de -
 For the won - ders that as - tound us, for the truths that still con -



sleep - ing, fu - ture needs in earth's safe - keep - ing, thanks be to God.
 spair - ing, in the har - vests we are shar - ing, God's will is done.
 found us, most of all, that love has found us, thanks be to God.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

Deuteronomy 8:10-18

When life is good, let's remember why.

When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out

of hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

Explanation to the First Article

(Creation)

I believe that God made me and every creature and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members, my mind and all my abilities.

And I believe that God still preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, cattle and all I own, and all that I need to keep my body and life, and by defending me against all danger and guarding and protecting me from all evil.

All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserved it.

For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him.

This is most certainly true.

LESSON

Philippians 4:4-13, 19, 20

When we feel left behind by better times...

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into

practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Explanation to the Second Article

(Redemption)

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord.

He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.

All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally.

This is most certainly true.

HYMN

"Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven"

Hymn 621

Hymn: 621 Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven



1 Praise, my soul, the King of heav - en; to his feet your
 2 Praise him for his grace and fa - vor to his peo - ple
 3 Fa - ther - like he tends and spares us; well our fee - ble
 4 An - gels, help us to a - dore him; you be - hold him



trib - ute bring. Ran - somed, healed, re - stored, for - giv - en,
 in dis - tress. Praise him, still the same as ev - er,
 frame he knows. In his hand he gent - ly bears us,
 face to face. Sun and moon, bow down be - fore him;



ev - er - more his prais - es sing; Al - le - lu - ia,
 slow to chide, and swift to bless, Al - le - lu - ia,
 res - cues us from all our foes; Al - le - lu - ia,
 all who dwell in time and space, Al - le - lu - ia,



al - le - lu - ia! praise the ev - er - last - ing King!
 al - le - lu - ia! glo - rious in his faith - ful - ness!
 al - le - lu - ia! wide - ly yet his mer - cy flows!
 al - le - lu - ia! praise with us the God of grace!

SERMON

Psalm 103:1-5

For Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow...We Give Thanks!

Praise the LORD, O my soul;
 all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
 Praise the LORD, O my soul,
 and forget not all his benefits—
 who forgives all your sins
 and heals all your diseases,

who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Explanation to the Third Article

(Sanctification)

I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.

But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers.

On the last day he will raise me and all the dead;

And he will give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

WE HELP OTHERS GIVE THANKS!

OFFERING MESSAGE

2 Corinthians 9:8-11

When God blesses, remember God's purpose for you and his blessing.

God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

OFFERING (Please fill out the friendship registers on the pews.)

If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in **WELCOME TO ST. JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**



After you bring your offering to the Lord, we'll join in singing *Hymn 609*.

HYMN

"We Praise You, O God, Our Redeemer"

Hymn 609

Hymn: 609 We Praise You, O God, Our Redeemer



1 We praise you, O God, our Re - deem - er, Cre - a - tor;
2 We wor - ship you, God of our fa - thers, we bless you;
3 With voic - es u - nit - ed our prais - es we of - fer



in grate - ful de - vo - tion our trib - ute we bring.
through tri - al and tem - pest our guide you have been.
and glad - ly our songs of thanks - giv - ing we raise.



We lay it be - fore you, we kneel and a - dore you;
When per - ils o'er - take us, you will not for - sake us,
With you, Lord, be - side us, your strong arm will guide us;



we bless your ho - ly name, — glad prais - es we sing.
and with your help, O Lord, — our bat - tles we win.
to you, our great Re - deem - er, for - ev - er be praise!

LITANY OF THANKSGIVING

P: Give thanks to the Lord who is good.

C: **God's love is everlasting.**

P: Come, let us praise God joyfully.

C: **Let us come to God with thanksgiving.**

P: For the good world; for things great and small, beautiful and awesome; for seen and unseen splendors:

C: **We thank you, O God.**

P: For human life; for talking and moving and thinking together; for common hopes and hardships shared from birth until our dying:

C: **We thank you, O God.**

P: For work to do and strength to work; for the comradeship of labor; for exchanges of good humor and encouragement:

C: **We thank you, O God.**

P: For marriage; for mystery and joy of flesh made one; for mutual forgiveness and burdens shared; for secrets kept in love:

C: **We thank you, O God.**

P: For family; for living together and eating together; for family amusements and family pleasures:

C: **We thank you, O God.**

P: For children; for their energy and curiosity; for brave play and startling frankness; for their sudden sympathies:

C: **We thank you, O God.**

P: For the young; for their high hopes; for their candid criticism; for their search for freedom:

C: **We thank you, O God.**

P: For growing up and growing old; for wisdom deepened by experience; for rest in leisure; for time made precious by its passing:

C: **We thank you, O God.**

P: For your help in times of doubt and sorrow; for healing our diseases; for preserving us in temptation and danger:

C: We thank you, O God.

P: For the Church into which we have been called; for the good news we receive by Word and sacrament; for our life together in the Lord:

C: We praise you, O God.

P: For your Holy Spirit, who guides our steps and brings us gifts of faith and love, who prays in us and prompts our grateful worship:

C: We praise you, O God.

P: Above all, O God, for your Son, Jesus Christ, who lived and died and lives again for our salvation; for our hope in him; and for the joy of serving him:

C: We thank and praise you, eternal God, for all your goodness to us.

P: Give thanks to the Lord, who is good.

C: God's love is everlasting.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

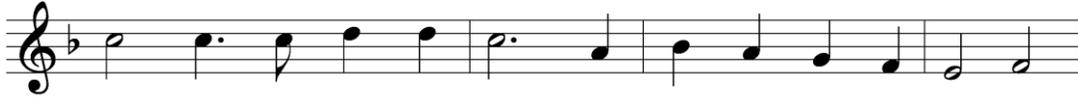
BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

Hymn: 597 Now Thank We All Our God



1 Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voic - es,
2 Oh, may this boun-teous God through all our life be near us,
3 All praise and thanks to God the Fa - ther now be giv - en,



who won - drous things has done, in whom his world re - joic - es;
with ev - er - joy - ful hearts and bless - ed peace to cheer us
the Son, and him who reigns with them in high - est heav - en,



who from our moth - ers' arms has blessed us on our way
and keep us in his grace and guide us when per - plexed
the one e - ter - nal God, whom earth and heav'n a - dore;



with count - less gifts of love and still is ours to - day.
and free us from all ills in this world and the next.
for thus it was, is now, and shall be ev - er - more.

Acknowledgements

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Join Us In Worship This Holiday Season!

Advent Wednesdays
at 3:30 and 6:30 pm
Advent Dinners at 5 pm

December 3 – Evergreens
December 10 – Lights
December 17- Nativity Scenes

Sunday, December 14 - Children's Christmas Service at 3:00 pm

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service - 5 pm
Christmas Day Festival Service - 9 am
New Year's Eve Service - 5 pm