GOLDEN JUBILEE of S. D. District
Trinity Sunday

Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

Psalm 95: 1-3 "O Come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods."

HOW MUCH DO YOU VALUE YOUR SALVATION?

This morning I would with the help of the almighty, all-powerful Spirit of God direct your attention to a question which has particular significance to us as we approach the climactic celebration of our South Dakota District's Golden Jubilee, and which is likewise extremely important to us as we commemorate this Feast of the Holy Trinity: HOW MUCH DO YOU VALUE YOUR SALVATION?

Have you ever stopped to think about just why God took such compassion upon our world, why He sent His only Son -- the Lord Jesus Christ -- into the world to save us from deserved destruction, why Jesus endured the agonies of the cross, of hell in our stead? Have you ever stopped to consider why you and I of all the people on this earth should know the only true God of heaven and earth -- the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, why we should be brought to know and confess that Jesus is both God and Savior, why we do not with countless others bow down to idols of wood and stone? Have you ever wondered why we are members of a Church which teaches God's Word in all its truth and purity, why we accept Scripture at face value, why we have not been led astray by our reason, the same reason which has led untold thousands away from the errorless truth of God's Holy Word, away from Christ and the cross, away from salvation? Certainly there is nothing in us which is worthy of such honor! Certainly we are not deserving!' The fact that we are Christians, that we trust in God, that we believe in the all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus for our sins is due solely to the grace, mercy, and love of God. Most assuredly each of us must confess in the words of St. Paul: "By the grace of God I am that I am!" Most definitely we ought to value our Christianity, our salvation as our most prized possession! But do we?

How often haven't I heard it said that adult converts often make much better followers of XP than those who have known from whence their salvation came from little on?

For fifty long years our God has blessed our Church in South Dakota. He has given us pastors and teachers who have been dedicated to Him, who have not deviated from the truth of His Word, who have preached Christ Crudified with all boldness. Our God has preserved for us the pure means of grace. We confess with Scripture that Holy Baptism is not merely a symbol or dedication but "a washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." We uphold the Scriptural truth that in the Lord's Supper we receive along with the bread and wine the true body of blood of Christ, which was given and shed for us for the remission of sins. We acclaim with Scripture that "there is none other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," but the Name of Jesus. Certainly God has shed His unbounded love upon us in keeping our Church close to His Word, free from the clutches of falsehood and error!

During these past fifty years our God has increased our membership. He has given us many fine and new churches where we can worship and revere Him as Lord and King, where we can join together in Christian fellowship, where we can instruct our youth in divine truths. Indeed, our God has bestowed upon us countless gifts -- both material and spiritual. He has richly blessed us with His unspeakable kindness and mercy.

In view of all that He has done for us and for our Church the Lord God would now come to you this day, you who are Christians, you who have heard the message of your redemption in Christ, you who have known the joy of having your transgressions blotted out, your iniquities washed away in the Savior's purifying blood, you have pledged your allegiance to Jesus, you who have vowed to follow Him all the days of your life -- the Lord God would come to you this day and ask you individually, you especially, you particularly: HOW MUCH DO YOU VALUE YOUR SALVATION? How grateful are you? How thankful are you for all the benefits which I, your God, have showered upon you? - gifts of health, sunshine, rain, food, clothing, shoes, wife, children etc.

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I can almost hear some of you retort: "Of course we are grateful! Of course we treasure our salvation as our most prized possession!" I pray God that that is the heart-deep conviction of each one of you! But it is heart-rending to note that year after year untold numbers have fallen from the riches of salvation to the terrors of damnation. Even after hearing the Good News of Redemption for their deseased, sin-infested souls through the healing medicine of Christ's blood shed especially for them and for every other human being in the world -- millions have turned away and rejected His dying love. They hear, they are perhaps momentarily impressed, but they refuse to follow! Forsaking the One True God, they fall down before the idols of fun and a good time -- fame and fortune -- lust and the flesh -- beauty and fashion -- comfort, luxury, ease -- power, might, authority. Eternal salvation is priced as worthless! Men and women, young people and children become so enwrapped in what this world has to offer that they have no time for God, no time for the Father who has created them, no time for the Son who has redeemed them, no time for the Spirit who would sanctify and sustain them in the true faith unto life everlasting! Time for life, but no time for eternity! Oh the pain which must pierce the Savior's heart for such ingratitude!

Were it not for the fact that we are all human beings, were we not engulfed in the flood waters of sin, were we not surrounded by the pleasures and enticements of a bountiful, luxury-seeking age, were our hearts not infected with the cancer of greed and selfishness, were our minds not constantly turning to thoughts of evil, were our tongues not ever and again bursting forth with words of anger, slander, filth, and profanity, were the devil not continually stalking about us like a roaring lion ever ready to devour us and pull us into the deepest depths of hell -- indeed, if we did not have the devil, the alluring world, and our own sinful flesh to contend with, if we were pure, holy, undefiled; then we would not have to remind ourselves or even speak about thankfulness and gratitude. Then at all times and in all places we would give the Triune God supreme worth;

then we would give Him His due as our text commands in honor, praise, and thanksgiving; then we would love Him above all things -- with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind. Then even the Lord God Himself would not have found it necessary to thunder from Mt. Sinai: "Thou shalt have not other gods before Me;" then He would not have to chide us at any time to bring us to our senses; then this world would be filled with peace, harmony, and love!

But such is not the case. We -- all of us -- are poor, lost, helpless, sin-cursed, condemned creatures. We do not readily and of our own will break forth in songs of thanksgiving and adoration to our loving and compassionate God. Yes, the Lord even has to instill in our hearts the will to worship Him, to sing praises to His Holy Name, to thank Him for all that He has done for us. If left to ourselves and our own base, low, self-possessed inclinations, we would spurn God and reject His grace and favor; we would deny Christ and flee from the pardon of His precious blood; we would value our salvation as being absolutely worthless.

The old saying -- "Once a Christian always a Christian" -- is far from being true. Each of us can fall from grace, fall from salvation! Scripture declares: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." And again Jesus asserts: "Not everyone that saith unto Me Lord Lord shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven." Can you begin to see how necessary it is that time and time again we fortify ourselves with the armor of divine strength -- God's Word and sacraments? Again and again the dynamic Spirit of the Most High must come to us in the Might and Power of His sacred, errorless, all-powerful Word, rekindle the fires of faith and love in our hearts, fill us with renewed devotion for our ever-blessed Redeemer, and help us overcome the ceaseless onslaught of temptation and conquer sin. Daily the "old adam" must be drowned! Daily a "new man" must come forth!

If your Christianity has become cold, matter-of-fact, inidfferent; if the thrill, the glamour, the sparkle of your blood-bought redemption has grown

dim; if the story of Calvary, the story of the Cross, the story of the Savior's dying love, the story of the Redeemer's hell-filled anguish and torment has ceased to move you; if your heart is not overflowing with gratitude to your gracious God; if you are not consumed with a burning zest to serve the God of your salvation, to follow Him no matter what -- then you had better take heed unto yourself. Something has come between you and your God. Something is barring the door of your heart, as your bleeding, redeeming Savior pleads for admission.

Our faith, our love, our gratitude must be constantly nurtured and strengthened. Even as parents must continually remind their children to say, "Thank you," to show appreciation, so also God has to remind us that He and He alone is God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and that we, His people, are to thank Him. Oh that on this day God would give you renewed life, renewed vigor, renewed stamina, renewed interest, renewed zeal, renewed dedication, renewed consecration, renewed love -- yes, renewed appreciation as once again you ponder your priceless redemption. "Lift up your eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh your help!" Particularly turn to Calvary's holy hill! See your Lord, your God! See Him extended between heaven and earth! See Him stretched out on the cross! See His nail-torn hand and feet! See His all-loving, all-compassionate face twisted in torment! See Him suffering the very agonies of hell! See Him wounded, dying, bleeding! And then remember that He is taking your place. He is dying, suffering for you. He is enduring punishment for everything about you that is wrong and ugly. He is your Savior.

O Come, then, as our text tells us let us all join together in heart-felt thanksgiving. Let us kneel before the Lord, our God, and praise Him for all His benefits toward us. Certainly we have a great, a mighty, a most wonderful God! He is our Creator, our Redeemer, our Sanctifyer and Comforter! Out of His goodness and mercy He has blessed us with countless gifts of love. Above all else, however, He has made us His own people. He has preserved for us His precious Word of truth.

Surely then, valuing our salvation, the gift of eternal life more than all else, we will want to make the celebration of our District's Golden Jubilee next Sunday a day of special thanksgiving to our good and gracious God. Joining together with the fellow saints in God's Kingdom of grace, we will enter into His courts with praise. We will testify to the world about us that our God and our salvation are the most wonderful things we have. With jubilant hearts we will declare the mighty works of God both in our own church and at the special Thanksgiving Service in Huron. The people of South Dakota will know that this is a great day for the Lord, for with the very angels in heaven we will extol our God and lift songs of praise and exultation to the throne of His grace.

Let us mark this week as a special week of thanksgiving and gratitude. Let us tell each other of the marvelous things God has done for us for which we are eternally grateful. Let us take our weak, our wavering brothers and sisters in the faith -- let us take them by the hand and glorifying God lead them into His sanctuary, His temple. Let us, filled to overflowing with joy and gladness, speak forth hallelujahs of sincere conviction to our beloved Redeemer!

let us join the psalmist in this hymn of thanksgiving

"O Come" -- one and all-"let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods."

Amen.

St. Paul's - Aberdeen
Leola
Long Lake