



HIS
STEADFAST
LOVE
ENDURES FOREVER

A SERVICE FOR
THANKSGIVING

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ABOUT THIS SERVICE

This service for Thanksgiving uses the Psalms' familiar refrain, "His steadfast love endures forever" as a framework for offering our gratitude to God. Songs, words and Scripture combine to reveal the vastness of God's divine love for us, especially in Jesus. Hymn include "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come," "Now Thank We All Our God" and "We Praise You, O God."

Complete worship service includes everything you need with the text of all the worship service in .rtf (rich text format), newsletter/bulletin notices, hymns, visual media recommendations, contemporary music song suggestions and PowerPoint documents of the service with images and text (along with a copyright release) for use on screens.

- The **Epistle Reading**, Ephesians 1:3-23, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

☐ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

- The **Gospel Reading**, Mark 6:30-43, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

☐ The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” But he answered them, “You

give them something to eat.” And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?” And he said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish.

- The **Sermon Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune *Wie Lieblich Ist Der Maien* 76 76 D, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Sing to the Lord of harvest, sing songs of love and praise;
With joyful hearts and voices your alleluias raise.
By him the rolling seasons in fruitful order move;
Sing to the Lord of harvest a joyous song of love.

God makes the clouds rain goodness, the deserts bloom and spring,
The hills leap up in gladness, the valleys laugh and sing.
God fills them with his fullness, all things with large increase;
He crowns the year with blessing, with plenty and with peace.

Bring to this sacred altar the gifts his goodness gave,
The golden sheaves of harvest, the souls Christ died to save.
Your hearts lay down before him when at his feet you fall,
And with your lives adore him who gave his life for all.

- The **Sermon** is delivered by the pastor:

☐ Grace, mercy and peace be with you, dear Christian friends. We give all thanks and praise to God on this Thanksgiving. Our forefathers saw the value of citizens taking a pause in their schedules to simply say thanks to God. But saying thanks is something that is hard for us to do sometimes. Saying thanks indicates that someone else is in charge, and that someone is Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the one who makes it possible for us to eat and sleep, to stay healthy and capable, to do work that is pleasing to him, and to grow in our connections with one another and with him.

Where that divine loving providence is shown is at the feeding of the 5000 in the Bible. Mark 6:34 records that as Jesus looked at the waiting and hungry crowd, “he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.” His compassion and love is what prompted him to provide food for them. Which he did, in a miraculous way, turning five loaves

and two fish into enough food to fill not only the stomachs of the 5000 men (not including women and children), but 12 baskets as well. Jesus' love for the people overflowed into an overabundance.

The overabundance of love God has for us fills us to overflowing, too. We have more food and drink than we need, as Thanksgiving dinners sometimes reveal. We have more clothing and shoes in our closets than what is absolutely necessary. The overflow of gifts extends to those things we cannot see or put a number on. We possess to the full, forgiveness of sins, new life in Christ in our daily living, and everlasting life awaiting us when we die.

One can only imagine what it must have been like to be among the 5000+ people who received just rich and abundant blessing when we needed it the most. They had no food. They had no place to go. They had no energy left. Jesus saw this and knew what they needed.

Jesus sees us when we need him most too. He sees what is lacking in us, and does everything in his power to restore us from being lost to being found, from being wayward to following him, from being helpless to having great help that gives us hope for the future.

Like the 5000 fed, we are satisfied and content because of Jesus. He shows us that the seemingly impossible can become possible. He takes the smallest offerings of simple basics and makes those blessings grow into something that can have a huge impact on a person, a people and a community.

Before Jesus fed the 5000 in this miraculous way, Jesus taught them, This was like food for their weary souls. His words were like manna from heaven that helped them to know that he was the Messiah who had come. He was the Bread of life who would nourish their spirits with the good news of forgiveness, life and salvation.

Just like we must eat three meals a day to stay strong physically, so we must regularly feed on God's Word, the Bible, each day, spiritually making us bolder and more courageous in our witness for the Lord. Our spiritual needs are always more important than our physical needs, and the 5000 who were on that hillside that day must have known that, because they made sure to feed on what Jesus said first before receiving the bread and fish for their bodies.

Jesus made sure to bless the bread and fish before he distributed the meal. We are called to ask God to bless our meals before we eat each day, too. Such a blessing puts our eating and drinking into perspective. The physical nature of food and its benefits are only part of the bigger picture of blessing and love God has in mind for all his children.

What blessings of God do you see in the bigger picture of God's loving plan for us? We might think first of the faith that we have in Jesus, the faith that we came to through the work of the Holy Spirit, faith that came not by what we had done, but solely through the death and resurrection of Christ. We might then contemplate the gift of grace, the free gift of God's love