

400 yrs ago. Lutheran pastor, Martin Rinckart, lived in the Lutheran town of Eilenburg, Germany during the 17th C. Yes, the whole town was Lutheran. How great would that be? Besides the usual troubles, worries of everyday life, Pr Rinckart experienced the horror of the 30 Yrs War. 1/3 of the German people killed. During the war, Pr Rinckart's city was sacked 3xs, once by the Austrian army, twice by Swedish troops. The horror of these attacks is hard for us to comprehend. But besides this war, Eilenburg would be attacked by something far greater - the plague. Rinckart conducted funerals for 4500 people. 8000 of Pastor Rinckart's fellow citizens died of plague In the very midst of this horror, Pr Rinckart put pen to paper, composed the hymn we just sang, "Now Thank We All Our God." How could he write, "Now thank we all our God, with hearts and hands and voices, who wondrous things has done, in whom His world rejoices, who from our mothers arms has blessed us on our way with countless gifts of love and still is ours today"? Was he blind to the troubles around him? Did he not live for decades with war and disease, the stench of death? Didn't he notice the suffering? Didn't he care? How could he possibly have written such a powerful hymn of thanksgiving? The answer is found, as always, in God's powerful, Spirit-filled Word.

We are a people who can say everyday, need to say everyday, **O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, His mercy endures forever.** St. Paul writes in the midst of prison, midst of suffering great persecutions, awaiting death, says **rejoice always, give thanks in all circumstances.**

Yet how often in good times, health is good, family not fighting much, job ok, money not an issue, we take God's goodness for granted, forget His gifts, forget to say thanks. And in times of hardship, unexpected bills, job really...., health not good, aches and pains, how we fail to rejoice, thank God in the midst of it.

What about when it seems that God's kindness has been taken from us? What about when family problems, cancer, disease come? What about when the vision, hearing, health deteriorates? What about when people turn against us? Can we still say, **rejoice always, give thanks in all circumstances.** Yes, then as much as ever.

To be sure, in this fallen world, everyone's life is difficult, experience troubles. Temporal blessings are just that, temporary. Sin ruins everything in the end, from international relations to our very bodies. The fact that God restrains the effects of evil as much as He does in this world, protects

And you, me, all us need to stop complain so much every time something is off, something wrong. We whine so much we should be ashamed. Our complaining, whining is wrapped up in our thanklessness, our lack of appreciation what God does, our lack of trust in Him to provide, our spoiled-brat sin as we live with having so much. What don't you find yourself complaining about.

Our greatest treasure of thanksgiving, is not a full barn or full bank account, or full table of family but Christ Himself, whose poverty made us truly rich. His mercy continues to give you all that you need, both for this world and the one to come.

Realize, Christ-centered thanksgiving is for our benefit, not God's. A reminder that God is our strength; by the power and might of His merciful hand, not our hands, we receive all that we have. Thanksgiving. to confess God as the Giver of all good things, for His goodness even amid hardships.

We give thanks in spite of cancer, war, abuse, hatred, disease. We know as bad as it might be we deserve even worse according to Divine Law. If you O Lord, judged sins who could stand?

You are a blood-bought people, even partake that same, very body and blood. Because His mercy endures forever. You live as baptized, forgiven, children in our Father's loving care as heirs of His kingdom, we **rejoice always, give thanks in all circumstances**. As in the Gospel a couple weeks ago, when Jesus speaks to His disciples who will soon all be persecuted, all but 1 brutally martyred, He says, **not a hair on your head will perish**. His work, His care is no less for you than it was for the apostles and His people of all times.

His mercy endures forever. That is reason enough to always give thanks in all circumstances - whether the harvest comes in or not, whether our children honor us or not, whether men lie and misbehave and drag us down or not, whether our church, our country, or our families endure or not. We give thanks always in all things because Jesus Christ died and rose and lives and reigns and holds all things in His hands, for you. This life with joyful moments, this sad, disappointing life is not all there is. For even as the worst and most torturous day here, even in Eilenburg is not as bad as an instant in Hell, so also the very best day here with family, friends, good food, in peace and quietness, cannot compare to what is to come, **rejoice, give thanks in all circumstances**.