

Thanksgiving 2012
November 21, 2012
Romans 2:3-4

In Christ Jesus, for Whom we are ever thankful people, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Our society has become an “**I want what’s coming to me**” society. You hear it when sport’s stars sign megabuck contracts---10 years for \$ 25 million a year! “I only want what I deserve, what’s coming to me”

You hear it when people go on strike. “We only want what we feel is fair. We want what’s coming to us.”

We even hear it in ourselves when we complain about bad weather; financial hardships; illnesses; problems and difficulties, as if we deserved better and are saying “I only want what’s coming to me, like everybody else.”

This evening our text from Paul’s letter to the Romans encourages us Christians to

THANK GOD WE DON’T GET WHAT’S COMING TO US!

If God really gave us what’s coming to us we would have no happiness, no peace, no joy, no future. Like Adam and Eve immediately after the fall into sin, we would live in fear and terror of God, each accusing the other for our failures. We would be doomed to a miserable life of pain, failures, endless frustrations, arguments, bitterness, strife, hatred, envy, diseases, and finally death and then eternal damnation. That is if God gave us what’s coming to us.

We read in Romans 2:1: **THEREFORE YOU ARE INEXCUSABLE, O MAN, WHOEVER YOU ARE WHO JUDGE, FOR IN WHATEVER YOU JUDGE ANOTHER YOU CONDEMN YOURSELF; FOR YOU WHO JUDGE PRACTICE THE SAME THINGS.**

When unbelievers, those who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior give thanks to God, they have no idea who this God is and they have no real idea what God has done for them. Self-righteous man even in his giving of thanks pats himself on the back. He is like the Pharisee in the temple who in essence said, “Thank You God for being so good to me because I have been so good to You and to others.”

That is kind of the problem that the Apostle Paul is addressing in our text this evening. Those of you who know the letter of Paul to the Romans will recall how Paul ends Chapter 1 with a most vile list of evils that godless people resort to---idol worship, not giving glory and honor to God but to themselves and to the creatures of this world. Paul says that this then leads people to sinful lusts of the flesh; sexual sins with members of their own sex; to sins of murder, pride, disobedience. They become God haters, unloving, unmerciful, unforgiving, and defend the rights of others to practice the same kind of immoral lifestyles they live. Sounds like Paul lived in our day and age.

Paul then begins chapter 2 with a rebuke against any who would condemn those who practice these things and not look at themselves, as if they were better. Here he is specifically speaking of the sect of the Pharisees, of which he himself was once one.

But these words also apply to any of us who puff ourselves up with pride and think that we are better than other sinners. Paul writes in vs. 2-3: **BUT WE KNOW THAT THE JUDGMENT OF GOD IS ACCORDING TO TRUTH AGAINST THOSE WHO PRACTICE SUCH THINGS. AND DO YOU THINK THIS, O MAN, YOU WHO JUDGE THOSE PRACTICING SUCH THINGS, AND DOING THE SAME, THAT YOU WILL ESCAPE THE JUDGMENT OF GOD?**

We too have been guilty of many of these same sins listed in chapter 1. We have been unloving, unforgiving, disobedient, proud, murdered others in our thoughts and words if not in our deeds; committed sexual, immoral sins in thought if not in deed. **THANK GOD!**

THANK GOD WE DON’T GET WHAT’S COMING TO US!

Paul knows how skillful, we by nature, are at evading the truth. Each person considers himself the great exception to the rule. My sin is somehow less bad because it is mine and somehow my good works are so much better than others, so I will for sure escape God’s righteous judgment.

This is simply irrational egotism and proud foolishness. But it is in the natural heart of all people. A heart that either assumes God cannot see and know what is really in the heart or a heart that believes God will be the all-seeing judge of everyone else but itself.

The other attempt at evading God's eternal justice Paul calls despising the riches of God's goodness, forbearance and longsuffering. In other words man sees God's goodness and patience with a sinful world as tolerating man's sin and therefore he grows secure in his own sins.

THANK GOD!

I: THANK GOD WE DO RECEIVE HIS GOODNESS.

Literally the word "goodness" means "kindness of heart." It is kindness in action; kindness expressing itself in deeds. Goodness which is expressed to someone else in grace, tenderness and compassion.

BOY does that describe our God in Jesus Christ. We find this same word in Eph.2:7 where we read: **THAT IN THE AGES TO COME HE MIGHT SHOW THE EXCEEDING RICHES OF HIS GRACE IN HIS KINDNESS TOWARD US IN CHRIST JESUS...and in Titus 3:4: BUT WHEN THE KINDNESS AND THE LOVE OF GOD OUR SAVIOR TOWARD MAN APPEARED, NOT BY WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH WE HAVE DONE, BUT ACCORDING TO HIS MERCY HE SAVED US.**

What a marvelous God we have. One who does not give us what we deserve, but says we won't get what's coming to us. Instead we will get His forgiveness, salvation, righteousness, peace, eternal life and so much more because of His goodness and kindness.

Our Lord is also patient and longsuffering with us. Not because He overlooks our sins, or condones them, or is powerless to end sin and punish the sinner, but because **HE IS NOT WILLING THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH BUT THAT ALL SHOULD COME TO REPENTANCE.**

And that is our second point this evening: **THANK GOD!**

II: THANK GOD HIS GOODNESS LEADS US TO REPENTANCE AND LIFE!

As we know the Law of God condemns everyone of us here this evening. None of us can escape the verdict of God's unchangeable justice that says **THE SOUL THAT SINS IT SHALL DIE!...THERE IS NONE GOOD, NO NOT ONE...FOR ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD...ALL WHO HAVE SINNED UNDER THE LAW WILL BE JUDGED BY THE LAW...WHOEVER WILL KEEP THE WHOLE LAW, AND YET OFFEND IN ONE POINT, HE IS GUILTY OF ALL...THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH.** Nothing to be thankful for there!

But even as God's Law condemns us His Gospel, which is the Good News of God's kindness to mankind in the person of Christ Jesus leads us to repentance and life. Jesus did live the life of perfection we could not live. He died the death we deserved to die---damnation for us. And He rose again and lives forever even as we will rise and live eternally with Him.

Yes, **THANK GOD!** Thank God on this Thanksgiving Eve and always that we do not get what's coming to us---a deserved damnation in hell, but that we have received God's goodness and kindness which gives us life and salvation alone through Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving begins with remembering our unworthiness and God's amazing grace! Genuine thanksgiving will then turn each black and white day into an array of colors as we see God's amazing goodness in the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the homes we live in, the fresh air we breathe, the health we have, the loved ones we enjoy and countless more blessings. All ours because He is our good and merciful Father in heaven.

True thanksgiving is as Paul put it in Colossians 3:17: **AND WHATEVER YOU DO IN WORD OR DEED, DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, GIVING THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIM.**

LORD GOD, HELP ME REMEMBER TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR GRACE AND MERCY TODAY AND EVERY DAY.

Amen.