

Now Thank We All Our God

Now? I mean, I know that's what the hymn says, but really? Thank God *now*?

A lethal virus is on the loose, forcing us to face months of restrictions and lockdowns, with no idea when that will finally end. To say our lives have been disrupted puts it mildly: wearing masks everywhere we go, limits on the number of people in stores, weddings postponed, funeral services restricted, family gatherings cancelled, people in nursing homes and hospitals cut off from their families and friends. Meanwhile (as if that weren't enough), we face deep political divisions, protests, social unrest, rioting and looting in many of our nation's cities. Businesses have been forced to close. People are out of work.

Did I miss anything? Probably, but I'm not so sure I want to turn on the news to look for more. Enough is enough!

What can we do about it all? "Now thank we all our God with heart and hand and voices!"

This familiar Thanksgiving hymn wasn't originally written for a national day of thanksgiving. It was written to be a mealtime prayer that the author, Pastor Martin Rinckart, gave to his children. Rinckart served as a pastor in a town called Eilenburg, Germany, through the brutality of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). Yet even amid those terrible days (and even worse days that followed), Pastor Rinckart realized that God has given us plenty of reason to give Him thanks and praise.

As the daily news bombards us with the bad in life, we easily forget that God continues to shower us with good. Over and over again, Scripture calls us to "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good" (see Psalms 118 and 136) because, "From our mothers' arms" He "has blessed us on our way with countless gifts of love." Our God goes with us, He has not abandoned us, and He is and will be with us always to the close of the age—and beyond!

So amid all the terrors of the world around us, remember what God has done for you, what He has promised He will do for you, and *what He is doing right now for you*. As Luther puts it in under the 4th Petition of the Lord's Prayer, "God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving." That "daily bread" "includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body," which Luther begins to describe in a list that has no end!

How do we hold on to God's gifts through these difficult days? Remember God! Remember what He has done for you. Remember what He has promised you in His Word.

Pastor Rinckert wore a ring inscribed with the word MVSICA. As a church musician, that doesn't seem surprising, but that wasn't the way Rinckert read that word. He explained it as an abbreviation for the sentence (in German) **Mein Vertrauen Steht In Christo Allein** ("My Trust Is In God Alone.")

So remember what St Paul wrote to the Philippians, not just the command but also the promise that follows on that command: "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:6-7).

Join us for Thanksgiving Services:

At St John's: Wednesday, November 25th at 7:00p,

At St Paul's: Thursday, November 26th at 9:00am