

Come Ye Thankful People Come ... Back to Church

Come, ye thankful people, come; Raise the song of harvest home.

All be safely gathered in Ere the winter storms begin.

God, our maker, doth provide For our wants to be supplied.

Come to God's own temple, come; Raise the song of harvest home.

Come, for God has blessed us with His bounty, His presence, and His protection for yet another year. Certainly, there have been times when it seemed like God had neglected us, even abandoned us, but even in those times of testing He has never left us. Air, food, shelter, family, friends, and so much more—all these have been with us, given to us by the gracious hand of God.

So **Come**, for God has blessed us with His promises. He knows we are weak, sinful human beings, and His Law exposes our sin. But to those who repent of their sins, He stands ready with forgiveness, from which flows new life for us now, and His promise of everlasting life in the age to come. All these have been prepared for us by God's greatest promise, the gift of His own Son, Jesus Christ. True God and true man, Jesus lived, suffered, and died on the cross to remove the burden, shame, and punishment of sin from us. As we have said so often, by His death He has destroyed death, and by His rising to life again He has restored to us everlasting life. And all of this is promised and delivered by the loving hand of a loving God.

So **Come**, for God has blessed us with His Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit's job to create faith, which He does as He works through the Word of Scripture and the Sacraments of Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord's Supper. God also delivers His Gospel to us through what Martin Luther called "the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren, 'Where two or three are gathered' (Matthew 18:20)" (Smalcald Articles, III, IV).

Of course, those conversations and consolations only happen when people come into contact with one another. And the Lord's Supper is only delivered when the people of God assemble before Him. This is why the writer of Hebrews says, *let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near* (Hebrews 10:24-25).

So **Come**, and establish or re-establish your habit of attending to God's Word with God's people in God's house each and every week. The word "habit" comes from the Latin word *habitus*, which refers to the place where a person lives. Where are you living each week, with God and His people or someplace else?

So **Come**, it is time for us to readjust our schedules and our habits so that we may receive more of God's gifts. It is time for us to come to church services and fill God's house once again, joining together with all God's people and calling upon our friends, family, and neighbors to join us where we together receive God's gifts and together sing God's praises.

Come to God's own temple, come; Raise the song of harvest home.