

# A Thanksgiving Day Devotion



**FIRST EVANGELICAL  
LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
H O U S T O N

*This devotion is for home use on Thanksgiving Day. If your congregation does not offer a Thanksgiving Day service, this devotion will help you to commemorate the day as a Christian household. It may help to have “Leader” (L) and “All” (A) roles, but this devotion may be done by an individual, or together without distinct roles.*

L: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

L: Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we set apart this day to give thanks to you: our Creator, our Provider, and our Redeemer. We give thanks for the gifts of this country and our freedom. We give thanks for our food and our shelter. We give thanks for family and friends. We give thanks for labor and rest. Above all, we give you thanks for the redemption wrought by your Son Jesus Christ, and the hope and promise of everlasting life won for us through Him.

**C: Amen.**

**Psalm 138** (*spoken together*)

1 I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise;

2 I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.

3 On the day I called, you answered me; my strength of soul you increased.

4 All the kings of the earth shall give you thanks, O Lord, for they have heard the words of your mouth,

5 and they shall sing of the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord.

6 For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly, but the haughty he knows from afar.

7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand delivers me.

8 The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

**A Reading from Luke 17:11-19**

On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus’

feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

**A Hymn: Now Thank We All Our God**

*(to be spoken or sung together)*

1. Now thank we all our God,  
with heart and hands and voices,  
who wondrous things has done,  
in whom this world rejoices;  
who from our mothers' arms  
has blessed us on our way  
with countless gifts of love,  
and still is ours today.

2. O may this bounteous God  
through all our life be near us,  
with ever joyful hearts  
and blessed peace to cheer us;  
and keep us still in grace,  
and guide us when perplexed;  
and free us from all ills,  
in this world and the next.

3. All praise and thanks to God  
the Father now be given;  
the Son, and him who reigns  
with them in highest heaven;  
the one eternal God,  
whom earth and heaven adore;  
for thus it was, is now,  
and shall be evermore.

## **A short story about Pastor Martin Rinkhart, author of the text for *Now Thank We All Our God***

“Martin Rinkhart was the son of a poor coppersmith in Eilenburg. By hard work, thrift, and the use of his musical talents, he scraped together enough to pay his own way through the University of Leipzig. He studied theology, intending to become a pastor.

In 1617, shortly before the Thirty Years’ War broke out, Rinkart became a full pastor. Eilenburg was a walled city, and as the war developed, refugees flooded in. Overcrowding led to food shortages. Plague soon followed. Each of the city’s four pastors held ten or more funerals a day. Overwhelmed, one ran away. The others died, leaving Rinkart to bury them. Though alone, he continued to hold all of the funeral services himself, sometimes for as many as fifty people a day. This included his own wife.

He survived the entire war, pouring himself out in charity, giving away all the food and clothing he had obtained, except just enough to preserve his own hungry family. He even mortgaged his future earnings. After the Swedes had besieged the city for several months, they agreed to leave if an enormous ransom was paid. Rinkart pleaded for better terms, but the Swedish army was inflexible. Knowing the sum could not be raised, Rinkart fell to his knees, praying so fervently that the Swedish captain was deeply moved and reduced the demand to a manageable amount.

When it finally appeared that there would be peace, Rinkart wrote a hymn of gratitude for his children to sing at the dinner table. ‘Nun danket alle Gott’ was later translated into English by Catherine Winkworth as ‘Now Thank We All Our God.’”<sup>1</sup>

L: Let us pray. Almighty God our Father, your generous goodness comes to us new every day. By the work of your Spirit, lead us to acknowledge your goodness, give thanks for your benefits, and serve you in willing obedience; bless the food we are about to eat, that it may remind us of the eternal feast in your Kingdom. Through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.<sup>2</sup>

**A: Amen.**

L: Happy Thanksgiving!

**A: Amen!**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/it-happened-today/5/28/>

<sup>2</sup> (Lutheran Book of Worship, p. 40)