

Dear Friends in Christ:

Can you be angry and grateful at the same time?

The answer is probably not—not if you are dealing with God. There are plenty of people who are angry with God for reasons good, bad, and indifferent.

This will be a tough thanksgiving holiday for them.

It would be very easy to be angry with God because I feel my glass is half empty. I may not have the living situation I would have wanted, or the family situation I would have wanted, or the financial situation I would have wanted. I may have lost someone close to me or lost my youth or lost my health. Loss can very easily shift into anger. How can anyone look at a glass that is half empty and not be angry?

But I could see things from a different perspective. I could indeed choose to free myself to give thanks to God for the glass' being half full. There is more than a grammatical difference between: *I lost what I once had* and *I had for a while what I no longer have*. The first sentiment feeds the clause, *and so I am angry*. The second sentiment can feed the clause, *and so I am grateful*. Some of us may consciously need to think not in terms of what we have lost, but in terms of what we had for a time this Thanksgiving.

A recent Epoch Times article suggested that gratitude lessens anxiety and depression.

I suppose it is true enough except for the fact that in some cases, one may need to consciously choose to have gratitude which is tough if one is filled with anxiety. Similarly one may have to choose to have gratitude from the depths of depression. Tough work indeed. But ultimately it is misguided to have gratitude to God because of some health or emotional benefit that may accrue to me. It is meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to God for his gracious gift of all that we have and are in this life and for the salvation he has promised us for Christ's sake in the world to come. Whatever blessings and gifts we may have had are not worth being compared to the glory that is to be revealed to us (Romans 8).

In early October we reflected on Martin Luther's explanation of the first article of the Apostles' Creed in the Small Catechism. It is a wonderful way to "set the table" for the Thanksgiving Holiday at the end of this month.

The First Article - Of Creation. I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

What is meant by this Article? Answer. I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that he has given and still preserves to me my body and soul, with all my limbs and senses, my reason and all the faculties of my mind, together with my raiment, food, home, and family, and all my property; that he daily provides me abundantly with all the necessaries of life, protects me from all danger, and preserves me and guards me against all evil; which he does out of pure, paternal, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which I am in duty bound to thank, praise, serve, and obey him. This is most certainly true.

Happy Thanksgiving,

John Shepherd McKenzie