

Let's Go Deeper...

Wednesday, November 25

Last Sunday was Thanksgiving Sunday. Thanksgiving Sunday is one of my favorites for many reasons, among them the opportunity to consecrate our pledges for the coming year, the cornucopia that adorns the table, and the singing of the great hymns of Thanksgiving.



Speaking of Thanksgiving hymns, do you know the story of Martin Rinkart? He was the pastor of a Lutheran Church in the town of Eilenburg, Germany, in the early-to mid-1600s throughout the Thirty Years War. During those three decades no less than half the German people died, while countless cities, towns, villages, and farms were destroyed, leaving thousands more people as refugees.

Many of the refugees came to the city of Eilenburg seeking safe haven. Pastor Martin Rinkart took them in. As the war continued, the deadly by-products of war-- the plague, pestilence, and famine-- descended upon the city in all their fury. Pastor Martin Rinkart, though a frail man himself, ministered to the sick and dying. During the course of the war, some of the other pastors in the city fled and others died to the point that during the latter years of the war the only surviving clergyman in the entire city was Pastor Martin Rinkart. He did 4,500 funerals during the Thirty Years War, including his wife's.

Finally, after thirty years, the war ended. And a decree went out through all the cities across the land ordering Thanksgiving services to be held.

Thanksgiving services? In that place devastated by famine and pestilence, grieving the deaths of countless thousands, filled with homeless masses-- no food, no health, no family or friends, no adequate clothing or shelter. Thanksgiving services? Thanksgiving for what?

The story as I've received it says Martin Rinkart sat alone in a room illuminated by candlelight. He thought back over what his eyes had seen and his ears heard. He remembered all the emotions his heart had felt throughout those thirty long years. Then he dipped his pen in ink and wrote:

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

*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 in his grace, and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills in this world and the next.*

Composed by Pastor Martin Rinkart to be sung in the Lutheran Church in Eilenburg, Germany, at their Service of Thanksgiving in the 1600's, we sang "Now Thank We All Our God" Sunday at the Lord's Table.

When I was little, I thought thanksgiving was for *what I had*. Now, thanks to Martin Rinkart, I understand that Thanksgiving is for *Who has us*. You see, if it's *what we have* that spells Thanksgiving, then there will be Novembers in each of our lives when we'll be hard-pressed to be grateful. But if it's *Who has us* that spells Thanksgiving, then there is always cause to come to the table.

Enjoy John Rutter's arrangement of "Now Thank We All Our God" with the Cambridge Singers: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= Z2_JLqOjNY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2_JLqOjNY)

Let's Get Ready **for This Sunday...**

Advent begins a new worship series titled "A Change Is Gonna Come". The scripture for this Advent 1 is **Luke 21:25-36**. Sermon: "A Change Is Gonna Come: in the Chaos".

In Christ,

Pastor David