

**GOD’S GRACE Jeremiah 2:13 Sunday 30 October 2011**

***“For My people have committed two evils:  
They have forsaken Me,  
The fountain of living waters,  
To hew for themselves cisterns,  
Broken cisterns  
That can hold no water. “***

Beloved in the Lord,

Now that the warmer weather has finally arrived, I decided that it was time to get my swimming pool in order. Last week I got a bucket out of the shed in order to mix some acid to put in the water. I filled the bucket with pool water only to find that my bucket was leaking. The bottom had a crack in it, and it could no longer retain any water. The bucket had become totally useless.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God said that the people of Israel had made two very serious errors, namely they had forsaken the Lord and secondly they had dug cisterns for themselves that were useless, that could not retain water.

As soon as a person forsakes the true God, and forms a religion for himself, forms his own faith, then he has dug a cistern that holds no water, that is as useless as my broken bucket.

Today in our service we have a double celebration – Reformation Day and also Harvest Thanksgiving. Both of these festivals knit together quite nicely as Harvest Thanksgiving is a time to thank God for all His bountiful and wonderful provision and Reformation Day is a time to renew our faith and commitment to God.

Reformation Day is also sometimes termed as “faith renewal day” Faith and thanksgiving go hand in hand. Faith acknowledges and confesses that God has created everything, and that everything we have is a gift of His grace and love. When we believe, then the obvious outflow of faith is thanksgiving. When we are thankful to God, then that in turn strengthens our faith.

Each and every one of us has a lot to be thankful for. I personally believe that Psalm 103 says it well and is a powerful reminder to us.

***“<sup>1</sup> Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
And all that is within me, bless His holy name.***

***<sup>2</sup> Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
And forget none of His benefits;***

***<sup>3</sup> Who pardons all your iniquities,***

***Who heals all your diseases;***

***<sup>4</sup> Who redeems your life from the pit,***

*Who crowns you with loving-kindness and compassion;*

<sup>5</sup> *Who satisfies your years with good things,  
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.*

<sup>6</sup> *The LORD performs righteous deeds  
And judgments for all who are oppressed.*

<sup>7</sup> *He made known His ways to Moses,  
His acts to the sons of Israel.*

<sup>8</sup> *The LORD is compassionate and gracious,  
Slow to anger and abounding in loving-kindness.*

<sup>9</sup> *He will not always strive with us,  
Nor will He keep His anger forever.*

<sup>10</sup> *He has not dealt with us according to our sins,  
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*

<sup>11</sup> *For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
So great is His loving-kindness toward those who fear Him.*

<sup>12</sup> *As far as the east is from the west,  
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

<sup>13</sup> *Just as a father has compassion on his children,  
So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.*

<sup>14</sup> *For He Himself knows our frame;  
He is mindful that we are but dust.*

<sup>15</sup> *As for man, his days are like grass;  
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.*

<sup>16</sup> *When the wind has passed over it, it is no more,  
And its place acknowledges it no longer.*

<sup>17</sup> *But the loving-kindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear  
Him,*

*And His righteousness to children's children,*

<sup>18</sup> *To those who keep His covenant  
And remember His precepts to do them.*

<sup>19</sup> *The LORD has established His throne in the heavens,  
And His sovereignty rules over all.*

<sup>20</sup> *Bless the LORD, you His angels,  
Mighty in strength, who perform His word,  
Obeying the voice of His word!*

<sup>21</sup> *Bless the LORD, all you His hosts,  
You who serve Him, doing His will.*

<sup>22</sup> *Bless the LORD, all you works of His,  
In all places of His dominion;  
Bless the LORD, O my soul!*

I included the whole Psalm because there is nothing that we can miss here.

Today, as I mentioned is Reformation Day. In light of that may I emphasise that aspect of God, that so impressed Martin Luther – His GRACE. Let us have another look at verses 8-13:

**<sup>8</sup> The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in loving-kindness.**

**<sup>9</sup> He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever.**

**<sup>10</sup> He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. <sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His loving-kindness toward those who fear Him.**

**<sup>12</sup> As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.**

**<sup>13</sup> Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.**

Did you notice two very important points. The emphasis is on God's compassion or grace and it is upon those who fear Him. When we fear God, when we humble ourselves in faith before Him, then we will always experience His Compassion. His mercy and grace. That my friends is great news.

In our foundation text today we heard what God said to the people of Israel through Jeremiah. The same problem of Jeremiahs time was prevalent in the church of Luther's time, and also too often today.

Many have forsaken God and followed their own religions. They have made up doctrines that have nothing to do with God.

In Luther's time, for those who remember their Church history, there was a man by the name of Tezel. He had devised a scheme whereby people could purchase Indulgences. These were bits of paper from the pope that absolved them of sin. People would buy these believing that they could purchase God's forgiveness. There was a saying that when the money sounded in the tin, then a soul was freed from hell.

The plain and simple truth is that a person cannot purchase forgiveness with any amount of money or by that matter any deed, or good work.

The only price for redemption that is acceptable to our Holy God is the precious blood of Jesus Christ, shed at Calvary.

Praise be to God, that He revealed this truth to Martin Luther and that He empowered Him to preach and teach this truth.

The Gospel is really very simple:

**<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16)**

When we believe in Jesus Christ, and Him alone, God accepts us. Our sins are washed away with Jesus blood and through faith we are justified.

See how great the love of God is. He has provided for our salvation from start to finish. All we need to do is accept His gracious gift.

Today on Reformation Day, may we return to our roots. Let us look deeply into our hearts and ask have we in any way forsaken God? Have we allowed anything to distance us from Him? Have we forsaken the fountain of living water and hewn out cisterns that are broken and cannot retain water?

The good news is that if we have, and if we come humbly to God in repentance and seek His help, He will instantly forgive us and restore us.

Three very powerful Words describe God. GOD IS LOVE. Let us engrave these words on our hearts. Every single day, let us thank Him for His love. Everyday let us renew our faith and commitment to Him. May we understand that above all things He loves us. He created us to enjoy Him, His presence, to have fellowship with Him.

In love He prompts us, He invites us, He encourages us to trust Him.

The truth is that everything already belongs to Him and is under His control. When we understand this, and when we are thankful for this, then we are blessed,

The more we live in faith, the more blessed our lives. We discover that He is The living Water and that the stream of His love and mercy never dries up!

With Him we have everything we will ever need. Paul said it this way:

***“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. “***  
Philippians 4:18

God will supply ALL your needs. How then can we not be thankful to Him?

Today on this festival day, let us all be thankful to Him. May we renew our trust in Him today and hand over the reins of our lives in faith.

Let us strive to live in such a way that we never leave or forsake Him, that we never dig our own useless cisterns. May God help us. Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible