

November 14, 2021

Psalm 116:12-19

“What Shall I Render to the Lord for all His
Benefits to Me?”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

What Shall I Render to the Lord for all His Benefits to Me? In those four, little words “... for all his Benefits ...” resides all the wonderful gifts that the Lord God gives to us. For all his benefits! The vast array of physical and spiritual blessings that God has heaped upon us is considered! The Lord God has made and preserves us. He has redeemed us. He makes us his own. At the heart of those four, little words we find Jesus and these words of Luther when he explains the second article of the Apostles’ Creed in the *Small Catechism*:

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be his own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.

If there is anything that is “most certainly true” it is that the Lord God loves us. James writes: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures (1:17-18).” Indeed! **What Shall I Render to the Lord for all His Benefits to Me?**

In Psalm 116, the psalmist states, “I will lift up the cup of salvation.” A cup is made for drinking, and this cup runs over with the salvation of Jesus the Savior who said to the Samaritan woman at the well, “... whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life (John 4:14).” **What Shall I Render to the Lord for all His Benefits to Me?** The first thing is that we simply, passively receive that which has been so graciously given! We will take it! We will drink it! This wonderful and great gift of blessing and grace and love in Jesus we will make our very own so that in our lives it can have its remarkable effect.

Who among us in soundness of mind would ever keep themselves from the glorious cup of Christ? And yet there is always that part of us that would avoid the preaching of the gospel, the daily dying and rising with Jesus in baptism, and the reassurance of forgiveness of sins in the body and blood of Christ. Reading the Bible at home and daily prayer are often neglected. Do you ever take a hard look at what you sinfully desire and despair in how you treat the cup of salvation? I know I do. Our sinful selfish desires do everything to keep the cup far away. May our sinful selfish desires die as we drink the precious cup where the Lord God becomes OUR Lord God and OUR great reward.

May the Lord God create and sustain hearts within us that “will call on the name of the Lord.” As Peter says in Acts 4:12, “... there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be

saved.” Hearts that no longer call on the name of the Lord Jesus are hearts that have become calloused by love for the world and the things of the world. The deceitful desires and the pride of life earns death. This world is passing away along with such deceitful desires. Therefore, may we call on the name of the one who is ever living so that we may abide forever. Let us then pray to the Lord, as one who begs, so that we may not forfeit our souls. Calling on the name of the Lord is to earnestly seek after Jesus in the means of grace. It means that we not only gladly receive the cup of salvation, but that we continue to seek after it and drink of it during the duration of our lives down here until we can forever drink in the majesty of his presence.

What Shall I Render to the Lord for all His Benefits to Me? Our psalmist goes on to say in verses 17-19: “I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem.” We sing these words in the Lutheran service before communion. We receive the cup and proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes as our only hope. What was proclaimed in the Old Testament is now fulfilled in Jesus. Do you know what it means in the New Testament to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and to pay our vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people?

If we really want to know what this means, then we need to understand what it means when we are called “a priesthood of all believers.” Because of our faith in the priestly work of Jesus, who offered himself as the sacrifice for all our sins, we are counted as priests. Priests sacrifice. Christ sacrificed himself to God for us. Likewise, we Christians sacrifice our bodies to Jesus and one another as the apostle Paul says in Romans 12:1, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

In other words, the Christian as a priest offers - gives - himself. The victim to be sacrificed is our old sinful self in the drinking of the cup of salvation. God embraces us as his very own. The sinful flesh does not like the cup of salvation because it means the death of wicked desires. The sinful flesh does not want to die so that we may be owned by God. But it must be sacrificed so that the new life of the believer may be manifest in the sacrifice of thanksgiving which is outwardly the paying of one’s vows. We give thanks for the mercy of God in Jesus. God is the only one who can truly give. Consequently, all we can do is gratefully drink the cup of salvation.

So what of this paying our vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people? In the Old Testament, the worshiper would make offerings whereby material items would be offered for others. It was a thank offering for all that the Lord had given. In the New Testament, and like the ancient, apostolic church, we continue to bring our material offerings where we return our earthly gifts to the Lord so that those gifts make their way to others. Jesus says in Matthew 5:23-24, “So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” There is nothing that we can give to the Lord who owns everything, but we can certainly give to the Lord by giving for others. And with that we are brought to all forms of stewardship. Stewardship is not cutting cost but is the mortification of the sinful flesh for another because of the sacrifice of Jesus. It is closest to the giving of the gospel and is also

in taking care of the needs of the poor. Because of the love of Christ we rejoice and cheerfully give who we are and what we have.

We always say that we love because he first loved us. That is stewardship at its core. And the love that we give to the Lord God takes its expression in the sacrifice of receiving the cup, thanking the Lord God for the cup, praying, and the giving of ourselves and what we have for others. This is our priestly sacrifice. We not only receive the sacrifice of Jesus, but because he is the priest who gave himself, and we believe in him, we become priests who sacrifice ourselves in what we give to others. In the words of one author who was paraphrasing Luther:

Worship is not confined to pious exercises in the sanctuary but includes the whole of the Christian life in service and self-surrender to the needs of the world. Our stewardship and offering of material gifts retain their close relation to the liturgy. But they are more than a liturgical act ... true bodily sacrifice is a total, continued giving of self which includes both faith and action ...”

From our experience we know that when our sinful nature wins and we no longer eagerly take the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord, our sacrifice of thanksgiving, paying our vows to the Lord in the presence of all the people wavers and dies. The Lord has been temporally and eternally generous to us. **What Shall I Render to the Lord for all His Benefits to Me?** You now know the answer.

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott