

***Ephesians 1:3-14** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. <sup>11</sup> In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, <sup>12</sup> so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

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Admittedly, there are things in the liturgy that we say often and think about rarely. We often sing the *Kyrie* asking God for mercy without any particular situation or need in mind. But it is another example I wish to draw attention to today. And at the end of the communion service, I always say to you, “Bless we the Lord,” and you sing, “[Thanks be to God].” So what does that mean, “Bless we the Lord?”

Well the congregation’s response gives a clue as to the meaning. To bless the Lord means to thank Him or praise Him. One person said it this way, “To bless God is to eulogize Him.”

Now, I know that many of you know that Lutherans don’t do much eulogizing of people in our churches. We don’t spend time at funerals of our members simply praising the person who has passed on.

But there is one eulogy that is always allowed in the Lutheran church. What is that? It is the eulogizing that our text does. It is the eulogizing of God himself. It is the telling of His goodness and mercy.

One good thing about eulogies that are to be given at funerals is that they do force the eulogizer to truly consider what exactly they want to mention about the person they are eulogizing. The memories are plentiful but what is it that really should be said in the few moments that are available. What is it that is truly memorable about that person?

Today we set out to do the same task. We ask ourselves, “If we are going to eulogize God, what are we to mention?” Sure there are lots of memories, from the scripture and from our daily lives. But what is it that needs to be mentioned in the eulogy of God. What is about Him that makes Him so memorable?

Is it that He gave us rules to live by? Is it that He is against things that are evil? Is it that He gives us the things that we need each day for our bodies?

Well, ultimately God is worthy of eulogizing for something much more important than any of these things. He is worthy because of His plan of salvation. Yes, it is the fact that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing that makes Him worthy of praise and thanks. Yes, God's plan of salvation. It began even before God created the heavens and the earth. It began when He chose you and chose me before the foundation of the world. It began when we chose us to be holy and blameless before Him, set apart for Him in this world. It began when He predestined that we would become His sons and daughters through the hearing of the Word and the washing of that same Word in Baptism.

It continued as He sent Jesus to shed His blood as the price of our release from the bondage of slavery to sin. Yes, in Christ, God sent in motion that plan which He had kept mystery for ages. He set forth how He would be reconciled to a world that had rebelled against Him and His will. In Jesus' death on a cross, He revealed to the world the means of its redemption.

Yes, because of God's plan from all eternity and His carrying out of that plan at Calvary, we are blessed in every way spiritually. We have been redeemed from sin. We have been given an inheritance that will not fade or spoil, kept for us in heaven. And on that Last Day when our Lord returns, that inheritance will become a fully realized reality that we call heaven. And until that Day comes, we have been given the down payment of that inheritance, the promised Holy Spirit to dwell in us to keep us in the faith and guide us in all our ways to walk in holiness and without blame.

That is why God is worthy of eulogy. It is His plan of salvation carried out by Jesus and delivered to us that urges us to eulogize Him.

When people hear you talk about God, what do they hear you thanking God for? What do they take away from your informal eulogizing? Do they think that you are just happy that God gives out rules that bring judgment on other people? Do they think your only reason for thanking God is because it allows you to live and worship in a particular way that you prefer? Do they think God is only worthy of praise only because He gives direction to your life in the here and now? Is that what people are hearing about our God?

Seriously, when is the last time that anyone heard you speak of the greatness of God's plan of salvation outside of these walls or that schoolhouse? When was the last time that you eulogized God for sending Jesus to the cross to a friend or family member? When is the last time that you thanked God for redeeming you outside of your prayers?

We tend to eulogize God for much simpler and quite frankly less impressive things that He does. We eulogize Him when it rains after a period of dryness. We eulogize Him when someone has been saved from a tragedy. We eulogize Him for giving us the many things that we find in each of our homes. And it is not that those things are not reasons to thank and praise God. It is just that when we get about eulogizing God, we need to make sure that we focus on the main reason that our God should be remembered. What is it that we should say in those few moments that we might have the ear of someone who desperately needs to know our God?

A eulogy of a president which mentioned none of His accomplishments in office would seem strange. A eulogy of a teacher without mentioning any of the effects she had on students would be quite odd. A eulogy of a doctor without mentioning the care offered to patients would be unusual.

Our lives are to be a constant eulogy to God. And if our lives fail to mention God's most important accomplishment, it would be odd indeed. And worse than odd, it would be tragic for it might lead one to think that our God isn't all that great. It might cause those that do not know Him now to never come to eulogize Him with us. In our words, our deeds, and our actions we must make plain that we praise God above all other reasons for sending His son to save us. We can mention the other things He does for us, but this must be the most mentioned topic of our lifelong eulogy to God.

It is where Paul made sure he started his letter to the Ephesians. It was the main topic of his eulogy about God to those Gentiles who formerly had not known God. It should also be where we start our conversation with others about our God. It must be the heart of our eulogy towards God.

Most people are eulogized because they have died. Our God is alive and worthy of our thanks, our praises, our eulogies.

Bless we the Lord. Thanks be to God indeed for choosing us, for sending Jesus, and for giving us an inheritance unto eternal life sealed by His Holy Spirit. Bless we the Lord. Amen.