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Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – November 26, 2020

The Lord be with you.

Happy Thanksgiving! A blessed Thanksgiving to you. One of the things that I'm especially thankful for today is you. Thank you for listening to the Selah podcast. I always look forward to getting to share these few moments with you.

I think it's significant that the word thank, which we're doing today, the word thank... It comes from the same root word as the word think. And people who study these things, they tell us that as far back as they can go into the early Indo-European languages, they see that our word thank and think they are connected. And so the wisdom of the ages are telling us that there was something about giving thanks that helps us think, to think more clearly about life, about the world, about God, and when we really stop and think about things, we can't help but give thanks to God. Good thinking and good thanking go together. The Apostle Paul says as much in Romans 1:21, where he tells the people who, quote, did not honor God or give thanks to Him. And Paul says, they became futile in their thinking. If we don't give thanks to God, it really does mess with the way that we think...

Now, there's some wonderful thanksgiving hymn that can help us to give thanks to God and what has admittedly been a difficult year, and in giving thanks, the hymn can help us think a little more clearly about a time of pandemic and shortages, economic uncertainty, social unrest, because this thanksgiving hymn, it comes from a time of war, of plague, shortages, starvation. The hymn I'm thinking of is "Now Thank We All Our God", written by German pastor Martin Rinkart, in which he is giving thanks to God in a time of great trouble. Pastor Rinkart, he originally titled to him a short grace before meals. As he wrote to him, wanting to give it to his children, as his wife had died at this point, wanting to give it to his children as a song to help them to think and to thank, as I sat down to eat, not our big Thanksgiving feast, but what were pretty meager meals.

First, I wanna say a little something about the times at which Rinkhart wrote this great Thanksgiving hymn... He wrote this hymn around the year 1636, which comes in the latter days of the horrific bloody 30 years war that devastated the tore apart Europe from 1618 to 1648, and there were estimates between four and a half to 8 million deaths from the war that was followed by famine, disease. And it is thought that in Germany, where Pastor Rinkhart lived, Germany lost up to 60% of its population, and with this devastation there came a breakdown in social order, and so they were refugees flooding the walled city of Eilenberg where Pastor Rinkhart ministered. All the other pastors of Eilenberg have either died. Or they fled at this point, so that Pastor Rinkhart ministers alone. Conducting as many as 40 to 50 funerals a day, including the funeral of his wife, and there was a total of 4,480 funerals at all that Pastor Rinkhart conducted during these years. And in the



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midst of war disease, family, Rinkhart shared as much of as food as he could, keeping bare rations for his children and himself, and he wanted a song for his children to sing as they sat down to eat and so he wrote what he called a short grace before meals that we know as Now Thank We All Our God. This hymn is a good reminder of what the Apostle Paul taught, to give thanks to God in all circumstances.

Now, in the first stanza of this hymn, Rinkhart is giving thanks for God's many generous and gracious gifts, and I can imagine him and his children holding hands and singing that first stanza, now, thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices, who wondrous things has done in whom this world rejoices, who from our mother's arms has blessed us on our way with countless gifts of love and still is ours today.

Now, not to say the second stanza, notice how Rinkhart moves from thinking and thanking God for His goodness in the past, he moves to the future, praying for God to guide and guard, offering up continued thanks. Oh, may this bountless 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 guard us through all ills in this world till the next.

In the third and final stanza, Rinkhart closes out the hymn as many German Christians would close that prayer the 17th century, he closes with The Gloria glory be to a Father, Son and Holy Spirit, praising God, three persons in one. All praise and thanks to God the Father, now be given the son and him who reigns with him in highest Heaven, the one eternal God whom earth and heaven adore. For this it was is now and shall be ever more.

And thanks to Pastor Rinkhart for connecting right thinking in a time of disease and trouble. For connecting right thinking to thanking God for all of his goodness to us.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening until next time.



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