

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Thanksgiving Day
November 26, 2020
Sermon by Pastor Justin Gran
God makes it rain

— Psalm 65:9-13

Imagine the beautiful picture that God paints in psalm 65. God is the master farmer cultivating the land and watering the crops abundantly. His irrigation trenches are spilling over and new grain is sprouting. Like a watering can from the heaven God is pouring out water to soften the earth and make things grow. The people of the land look back on the year and see a cornucopia God's rich blessings. The psalmist pictures a year of such abundance that the wagon wheels are sinking into the ground because the carts are stacked so high with the produce of the land. And even after the harvest, the desert isn't even that much of a desert; it spills over with still more. It's clothed with gladness, covered with flocks, and mantled with grain. There is joy and singing because God makes it rain, and in that simple way, he provides for his creation.

Today we are considering the rain as an example and means through which God sustains his creation... but it hasn't rained in the valley literally in months. We hoped and prayed for the monsoon rains to come, but that season came and went with little moisture. But that doesn't make psalm 65 any less relevant. In the past months of drought, did you ever go to your faucet and not find water? Why is that? Well we can be thankful for modern technology and conservation efforts that bring water into our homes. But there has been water flowing freely into your home not merely because SRP is at work, but because **the streams of God are filled with water to provide for people**. And yes, there were times this past year where certain basic necessities like toilet paper and food staples were hard to find due to panic. However, here we are: well clothed and well fed. Why is that? We are thankful for our nation's infrastructure and the continuous supply chain, but remember it is the Lord who has crowned even this unusual year with bounty. God makes it rain. The only true and eternal God showers every blessing upon his creation whether his creation recognizes it or not.

Do you and I always recognize it? It's one thing to confess with our mouths that the Lord makes it rain, that the Lord provides and sustains his creation, but practically speaking, do we contemplate and trust that truth from day to day? Perhaps those references throughout Scripture to rain and seasons resonated more with people in Bible times because they lived in an agricultural society. Their food was tied to the rain and the seasons. Today in our big city we're not as directly connected to our food sources. Just think of how many hands that piece of produce passes through before it reaches your table. We don't even think about where it comes from because it's so easily accessible. I'm not saying that we have to be able to trace every bite we eat back to the farm where it came from, but do we recognize the ultimate source? It comes from the Lord who created all things and sustains all things, including you and me.

Our problem goes deeper than that though. It's not just a matter of taking for granted the material blessings of God; it's also a matter of failing to trust the Lord. Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount pointed to God's providence when he warned against worry—**“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”** And, **“See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”** Worry doesn't always manifest itself in wondering where the next meal will come from. For some that may be a reality and we want to help in way that we are able to. But often worry can manifest itself in speculating on the future, “What will happen tomorrow?” Even if we have no reason right now to worry, worry might show itself in a work ethic that depends solely on ourselves to provide and accumulate material possessions. Consider all that has happened this year that we did not plan, and yet the world still turns. The sun still rises each day on the righteous and unrighteous alike because that is how God has ordained it.

The real danger in failing to recognize the Lord as the source of our daily bread isn't merely that we become ungrateful. The real threat and danger is that we become unbelieving. If I fail to trust the Lord to take care of me physically, how will I trust him to take care of me spiritually? If I'm trusting in only me to meet my physical needs, to whom do I look for my spiritual needs?

Remember, God makes it rain. That's such a simple truth beautifully portrayed in Psalm 65. God makes it rain. And through that simple, natural occurrence the Lord not only provides for his creation, he also gives a powerful testimony. The Apostle Paul was in the city Lystra on his first missionary journey, and was doing some raw mission work among people who were engrossed in the worship of Greek gods. As Paul pointed these people to

the true God, he said, “[**God**] **has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy** (Acts 14:17). Our God reveals himself. He reveals himself through his providence. He shows his kindness by sending rain from heaven. He shows himself as a caring God by providing food for every living creature. He does this so that we might make this connection: The same God that showers us with every physical blessing and sustains our bodies is the same God who pours out his grace in abundance to bless us with every spiritual blessing. The one who sends the rain to water the earth is the one who sent his Son to save the world.

Our physical needs are so obvious. If I'm hungry, I need to eat something. If I'm thirsty, I need to drink water. If I break my leg, I need to go to the emergency room. But when all these needs are met, there's still more. Maybe it's harder to put your finger on it at times. Why am I still troubled at times? Why is it so hard to rest and be at peace? Because even on a full stomach, my conscience convicts me. Sins of past and present weigh me down with guilt and shame. God takes care of that too. There's a beautiful phrase earlier in Psalm 65 that we didn't read. Before David, the psalm writer, praises God for his providence, he acknowledges the spiritual blessings that come from God. He wrote, “**When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions.**” It's so beautifully and simply stated. When we were overwhelmed, drowning in sin, the Lord forgave us. The Lord provides. The Lord who provides sustenance for the body provides salvation for the soul. He provided his own Son, Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice for your sin. Jesus satisfied the righteous requirements of his Father's will. He always looked to his Father as the source of every blessing. He always trusted. As a result, our sins of doubt and ungratefulness are covered and cleansed by the blood of Jesus. The same God who makes it rain pours out grace on top of grace into our lives. He satisfies our hungry hearts with forgiveness, and he quenches our thirsty souls with peace.

God makes it rain. I think that's good reminder for us this year especially because as we confess that God makes it rain, we must confess that we can't make it rain. It's completely out of our control. Has that reality hit you yet in 2020? It is completely out of our control. That's always been the case though. We really are at the mercy of the one who makes it rain. Thankfully, the one who makes it rain is merciful. You and I cannot produce the things we need for our bodies. We only have the resources that a gracious God has laid at our disposal. We cannot produce the righteousness that God requires. We rely solely on the righteousness that comes from Christ. God makes it rain. He forgives our sins. He provides all we need to sustain this life. He does this only because he is our good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because we have earned or deserved it. For this we come before our God in thanksgiving because he has provided all we need for body and soul. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is Good. His mercy endures forever.