

## THANKSGIVING 2009 MESSAGE

TEXT: **Luke 12:22-31**, serves as message text, is read:

THEME: FOR THE BEAUTY OF THE EARTH

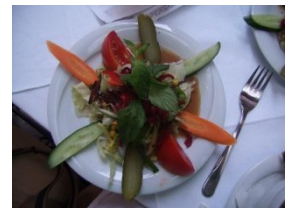
**Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, 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, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.**



For the Beauty of the Earth.” That is the title of our service this day as we gather to thank and praise our triune God. That is the title of the service ... but as the theme for our worship ... well, it hardly seems to scratch the surface!

The BEAUTY of the earth is in some ways superfluous, after all. Beauty, in general, is the icing on the cake ... the added extra. We could live without beauty. It doesn't put food in our bellies or roofs over our heads.

Yet, even in those things we are often treated to the “added value” of beauty. Who doesn't enjoy a well-put-together sandwich more than a thrown-together one? Foodies remind us that we eat with our eyes before we eat with our mouths. Presentation can be delicious, too. We are treated, even as we nourish our bodies, to beauty. Extra!



When we thank God for the beauty of the earth, we begin by thanking God for the NECESSARY things. Martin Luther once summed them up in a brief list that seems quite comprehensive: food and shelter, home and family, daily work and all I need from day to day. That sums it up, doesn't it? Those are the things we need to exist.

But then God goes beyond those things. Did you listen to the words from Genesis ... from



the-top, more than enough, beautiful.

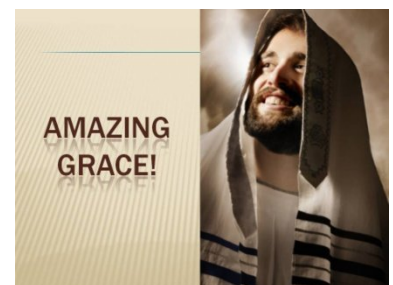
God's added-extra providence goes far beyond the beauty of the earth itself. We've already shared an antiphon called "Marvelous Me." Normally we good Christian-types avoid such "arrogance." But we ought not! It is not arrogant to praise your God for your YOU: your body, your experiences, your abilities, your talents, your strengths, your thorns-in-the-flesh even, your accomplishments, your tastes. Oh, the great variety that is YOU! It's more than okay to proclaim, "You know what? I AMAZE ME!" ... always adding "Thank God!" to your bold proclamation.



In worship this day we have also already broached the topic of "Wonderful Love." What an important gift from our God: family, friends, coworkers—the joy of working together to accomplish a task when everything clicks—schoolmates, pen pals, internet acquaintances. Loving and being loved is an essential part of being human ... of being YOU. And it is ordained and blessed by God. "It is

not GOOD for the man to be ALONE," God proclaimed in the Garden of Eden. We are meant to be in relationship with others ... MADE to be that way. As God "brought the woman" to the man in the Garden of Eden, so it is GOD who BRINGS these others into your life.

Now, what Thanksgiving service would be complete without focusing on God's "Amazing Grace"? It is a gift of God—THE gift of God—made most obvious in the person and work of Jesus Christ. His coming to earth in Bethlehem was pure grace. His teaching and healing was pure grace. His sacrifice on the cross was pure grace. His rising from the



tomb and opening eternity to all of us was pure grace. In Jesus Christ God's grace finds its FACE. But God's amazing grace is evident throughout his Word: The entire history of salvation is a string of amazing and gracious acts of our graceful Lord. The call of

Abraham and the anointing of David—grace. The Exodus from Egypt and the return of Babylon—grace. The crowning of kings, the appointing of prophets, Noah's bouyant boat and Jonah's fleet fish—all are touchstones along the path that leads to manger, cross and open tomb. It is amazing grace. It is beautiful in the truest sense of the word. It is beautiful ... even the crude manger and the cruel cross become things of beauty when Christ touches them ... as do YOU in our loving Father's eyes, when Christ touches YOU!

This is the place where those stories of God's amazing grace are ALWAYS told, whenever we gather at the cross, the font and the table ... even when we gather to hear wedding vows ... or when we gather at the grave. For we know that this story, the story of God's amazing grace, is a never-ending story. BEAUTIFUL!



Look for beauty this day. In the earth ... in yourself ... in loving relationships ... in the grace made evident in Christ Jesus.

And then live a life reflecting that beauty. We talk about being gracious. Think, in these next days, about being grace-FULL—full to overflowing with the grace God has gifted to you. Grace-FULL people are a beautiful people, indeed. Live grace-FULLY. In the name of Jesus Christ, our grace-full Savior. Amen.