

“The Lord Provides”

(James 1:17 – Thanksgiving – November 26, 2025)

James 1:17 – *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.”*

Dear fellow-Redeemed, beloved of God in Jesus Christ:

Some of us have participated in that Thanksgiving custom in which kernels of corn are passed around the Thanksgiving table, so that each person holds a certain number of kernels in hand. Then, each person around the table takes a turn telling about some of the blessings the Lord has provided in the past year – one blessing for each kernel in the hand.

On Thanksgiving Day, and every day, it is good to stop our busyness and take time to recount the many blessings God has provided for us this year. For as our Scripture says: *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.”* We can give thanks to God that He provides all our needs, for both body and soul, as a heavenly Father knows best.

“The Lord Provides.” The word “provide” is related to the word “providence.” When we think of God’s providence, we think not only of how He once created all things in the universe, but also how He continues each day to keep all things in His creation going in their proper order – according to His will and for our good.

We proclaim the truth of God’s providence every time we gather here and confess our faith together using the Apostle’s Creed. We say: *“I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”* What do we mean when we say these words? In our Catechism, we explain what we mean in terms of His providential care:

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them; that He richly and daily provides me with food and clothing, home and family, property and goods, and all that I need to support this body and life; that He protects me from all danger, guards and keeps me from all evil; and all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which I am in duty bound to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

The living God, who created and continues to sustain the heavens and the earth, is not the “Clockmaker God” many people want to picture Him as being. He did not just make the universe and our world, wind it all up like a clock, and then go away, leaving it to tick-tock on its own. Thanks be to our loving Creator that He does not leave us to exist

meaninglessly under the cold laws of physics. Rather, we know from what God tells us in His Word that He is intimately involved in our day-to-day life. It is by His almighty and sustaining power, at every moment in time, that everything around us continues to exist and function. Our life is precious in the sight of Him who gives us our daily life.

The providence of God involves, not only the Father, but also His Son. Colossians 1:16-17 says of God's Son: "*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*" Jesus Christ is the eternal Word of God, who spoke in the beginning, through whom all things were made (John 1:1-2); and He continues to uphold all things by His almighty Word (Hebrews 1:3).

Therefore, the personal God wills our existence. He speaks and we live. Without His creating and sustaining providence, we could not take our next breath. Without His providing the regular impulse, our heart would not beat another beat. It is by His almighty power that the seasons continue to cycle, the clouds bring water, the trees bud, the crops produce; and our mouths are filled with good things to eat every day. How true it is: "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.*"

Therefore, how fitting it is as we pray: "*The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing*" (Psalm 145:15-16). "*Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever*" (Psalm 106:1).

Yet we cannot rightly thank God just by looking at the bounties of His creation. We cannot find comfort just by contemplating His watchful providence over every detail of our lives. This thought would be frightening if we did not also have proof of God's personal love for us. For since He is so intimately involved in providing our day-to-day life and breath, that means He is also ever-present to see all the times when we have not been good stewards of His many gifts to us – when we have been wasteful, when we have been selfish, when we have not loved those He has put around us. He has been present to see all the times when we have had unthankful hearts.

So if we did not have proof of His personal love for us sinners, we could only think of Him as a Judge watching our every move, to whom we must give account. Even though we had all the blessings and comforts of life we could ask for – "food and clothing, home and family, property and goods" – these alone could not put our hearts at ease in His presence. For Scripture says: "*He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust*" (Matthew 5:45).

But thanks be to God, we do have the proof of His personal love for us. In His Gospel, God graciously reveals that in His boundless love, He sent His own Son into this world, in our flesh and blood, to redeem us from our sin and death (John 3:16). That Word of God who spoke in the beginning, creating all things, that Word of God in whom all things continue to hold together, *“became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14). This Jesus, our God and our Brother in the flesh, offered His life unto death on the cross for us. By this perfect gift from above, the gift of His own Son, God has delivered us from all our sin and guilt. We are set free from the death we had coming for sins committed in His presence. Through the gift of His Holy Spirit and faith in His Son, God the Father is now giving us His precious gift of eternal life, as His beloved children in Christ.

This is why, every day and every moment of our lives, we can truly give thanks for our heavenly Father’s personal, loving providence. Along with the gift of His Son and heavenly riches, God promises to provide all that He knows we need in this world. It says in His Word: *“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32).

Jesus says: *“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”* (Matthew 6:31-33).

Now as Jesus taught us, we can pray to *“Our Father who art in heaven”* in every need. In good times and bad times, in love He is watching over and providing His children with every daily need as He knows best. And He gives us true hope and joy, as we look beyond this world to that wonderful heavenly homeland He is providing for us!

Therefore on Thanksgiving Day, and every day, we can truly *“Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever”* (Psalm 106:1). Every breath of air He gives, every bite of bread we receive, every Word of promise He speaks, every moment of loving companionship with family, friends, and church members – every gift reminds us how intimately He knows us and provides just what we need. And most of all, we can give thanks for the gift of His dear Son, our Savior. In Jesus, we can count both temporal and eternal blessings, and thank God for His loving providence. Yes, thanks be to God: *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above,”* coming down to us from our heavenly Father!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.