

*Thanks to God for my Redeemer, Thanks for all Thou dost provide!
Thanks for times now but a mem'ry, Thanks for Jesus by my side!
Thanks for pleasant, balmy springtime, Thanks for dark and stormy fall!
Thanks for tears by now forgotten, Thanks for peace within my soul!*

*Thanks for prayers that Thou hast answered, Thanks for what Thou dost deny!
Thanks for storms that I have weathered, Thanks for all Thou dost supply!
Thanks for pain, and thanks for pleasure, Thanks for comfort in despair!
Thanks for grace that none can measure, Thanks for love beyond compare!*

*Thanks for roses by the wayside, Thanks for thorns their stems contain!
Thanks for home and thanks for fireside, Thanks for hope, that sweet refrain!
Thanks for joy and thanks for sorrow, Thanks for heav'nly peace with Thee!
Thanks for hope in the tomorrow, Thanks through all eternity!*

As we finish up our look at the Thanksgiving Carols we'll be singing tonight in worship, I've saved my favorite for last. One of the hardest things about giving thanks is when we have a hard time thinking of all we have to be thankful for. This has perhaps never been more true than this year. I mean, what do we have to be thankful for this year? COVID? Losing 250,000 people this year? So many loved ones lost in our LCC community alone? Civil strife if not civil war around this election? The exposure of such intense levels of institutionalized racism in our country? So many loved ones lost to racial crimes at every level? Drowning hurricanes and raging forest fires? Murder hornets, global warming, and world-wide dust storms? It's been a hard year to be thankful.

And that is what this hymn is all about. It's easy to be thankful when we have so much to be thankful for, when we ponder "all Thou dost provide". But we are also called to be thankful in the hard times. Thank God for "pleasant, balmy springtime!" But thank Him, too, for "dark and stormy fall".

This year we were able to have our Unhurried Retreat, and our Confirmation Lock in, our winter retreats, and 2 good months of worship together. And for those things, we thank God. But then the country closed up like a giant clam, and we lost our Lent, our Easter, our Confirmation Sunday, our All Church Retreat, our Fall kickoff, and our All Saints Celebration. Our thanksgiving celebration will be virtual, as most likely will our Advent and Christmas. And for that... we thank God. Why? Because we have those experiences in our lives to miss this year. Because we can grieve the loss together rather than alone. Because we have lost much, but retained even more. Because losing our traditions has not meant we've lost our Savior.

Did you know that this year we've reached significantly more people with our worship services than we ever have before? The good news of Jesus is being heard every week through our ministry literally from coast to coast, from northern border to southern, and all over the country. People who have moved away from us are able to join us for worship now! People who are stuck at home can still be part of our community. People who would never take part in worship are now able to through video.

Did you know that our Trunk or Treat allowed us to reach out into our community and reach hundreds and hundreds of people we wouldn't have otherwise reached? Did you know that we continue our Love Inc ministry, giving to our ministry partners, discipleship, and care for our congregation?

But most of all, did you know that God is still on His throne? That Jesus is still Lord, and that we still have a mission to accomplish? So thank God for "roses by the wayside", but also thank God for the "thorns their stems contain". Don't let your thanksgiving be limited to what you like. Give thanks in all things, for this is God's will.