

Thanksgiving-“The Power of Being Thankful” Luke 17:11-19

11.19.17

I invite you to turn in your Bibles with me to Luke’s Gospel chapter 17, verse 11.

As you are turning there this morning, I want to begin by saying how thankful I am for what occurred in this room last week. We truly saw a special and powerful moving of the Lord last Sunday. We had five people either come forward at the end of the service professing faith in Jesus Christ or they met with me, and Pastor Dale after the service, in the Guest Information room. What a day!

And, might I say...I believe there will be more. I’ve already talked to several other folks this week who raised their hands last Sunday and I believe as they work through some things in their hearts and minds, they too, will come forward to publicly confess Christ as their Lord.

So, I say, “Thank you Jesus for all you are doing and will continue to do!” And this morning...we’re going to see more thankfulness! We’re going to see from a man who was a hopeless, helpless, very sick man...who was treated as alien...an outcast to his community...a man who was a dreaded leper; yet, a man who was thankful. Let’s watch this scene unfold...

Luke 17:11-19

¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance ¹³ and lifted up their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” ¹⁴ When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed. ¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶ and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? ¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹ And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

What did we just see? Quite simply in summary: We saw the miraculous healing of 10 men, but only one came back to thank Jesus. That’s it. Short and sweet. Only one came back to give thanks. How did Jesus respond? He was disappointed. There’s no other way to slice it. He was disappointed in what He had just witnessed. He said, “Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?”

Church family, do you understand this morning that Jesus wants us to be thankful? That’s the point of this entire experience. He desires for us to express our thankfulness for all that He does in our lives. It’s like the old song says, “Count your many blessings...count them one by one...count your blessings, see what God has done.” But, do we? Aren’t we most apt to be like the 9 who weren’t thankful? Aren’t we most apt to even complain to God about what we don’t have versus being thankful for what we do have?

I see disappointment and frustration in Jesus in verse 18...

Luke 17:18

¹⁸ “Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”

Yes, it’s the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Yes, our focus and attention is supposed to be on Thanksgiving, right? So, we’re supposed to be thankful this week, right? Of course!! We’ll all be more thankful this week...and yes, I can lay a guilt trip on all of us this morning by using this passage about how we should be more thankful throughout the year...and we know that...so, what

should be our focus with this text? Should it be a “beat-down” message from Scripture that should create overwhelming feelings of guilt and shame? Should this be a message of condemnation to the max!!!

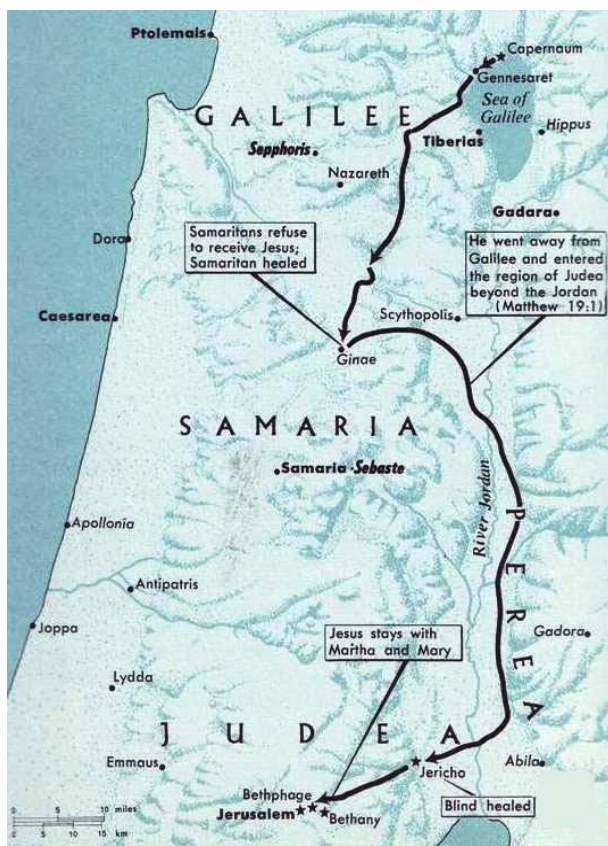
Well...those are all certainly potential feelings we might have initially, because we all stand guilty of not being thankful enough... But, I don't believe that's what the Lord desires. In fact, I believe what we can learn from this passage today is that an attitude of gratitude...a thankful heart...CAN truly bring power into our lives that can change the way we live forever.

And, that's why I've titled the message: “The Power of Being Thankful.” Listen, there is POWER in being thankful. That's what we are going to see today. When we're thankful, POWER IS UNLEASHED in the life of a believer. Strength, energy, courage, POWER comes from a thankful heart. Let's watch this play out... **Look at verse 11...**

Luke 17:11

11 On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee.

Once again we see here in Luke's Gospel the same thing we've been studying in Matthew's Gospel: Jesus is on His final trip to Jerusalem to meet His death on the cross, but today...here in Luke's Gospel, we've backed up a bit in the timeline to right before Jesus made His journey through Perea. Take a look at the map...



See the middle of the map where it says, “Samaria.” We've moved back in the timeline to where Jesus was seeking to enter Samaria from Galilee. He's on His third and final journey to Jerusalem. And let me say this... The first two times He went to Jerusalem was to observe the Feast of Tabernacles recorded in John 7 and 8. (The Feast of Tabernacles is the celebration of the Israelites living through the 40-year desert wandering before coming back into the Promised Land) and the second time was to observe the Feast of Dedication, (“Hanukkah”), as recorded in John 9 and 10.

So, Jesus is making His way south to Jerusalem He encounters 10 lepers...

Luke 17:12

¹² And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance

Now, you may remember way back in our study of Matthew to chapter 8, when encountered another leper. We talked extensively about leprosy then...but, I'll review a bit, since that message was all the way back in July of 2016. ☺

Leprosy was an extremely infectious skin disease. In fact, it was regarded by the Jewish community as a clear sign of God's displeasure with a person. Therefore, those who contracted leprosy were considered outcasts of the community. Interestingly, most Bible Scholars trace back the disease to the Egyptians. It's a disease of the skin caused by a bacillus or bacteria called "*mycobacterium leprae*." It appears the nation of Israel contracted the disease while they were in exile in the land of Egypt in slavery. When they were finally freed by God through Moses, they brought it with them back to the Promised Land.

Let me just tell you a little bit more background about leprosy. Leprosy attacks the nerves and the skin. See this girl...she has leprosy on her face...



When you first get leprosy, it shows up as white patches on the skin, like with this little girl from Nepal...



Leprosy causes the nerve endings in the body to die and with the accompanying loss of feeling in the body due to this, the person begins to destroy his own tissue because they have no feeling. So, that over time, you begin to rub off those diseased parts, like your fingers and toes and particularly the areas of the body with cartilage... like the ears, nose and even lips.

Here's a picture of a lady who has lost her fingers. She's from the Congo in Africa...



Leprosy can destroy your eyes, causing blindness; and it can penetrate the teeth so that they fall out. Often times, leprosy affects the larynx (the voice box) so that a person winds up with a very weak and raspy voice. Something else that's very horrible about the disease is that as your flesh rots...the stench...the smell is almost unbearable. They would wrap themselves in clothes to try to soak up the smell...but, anyone who's ever been around a leper colony would tell you how absolutely unreal the smell was...

Thankfully today, leprosy is not that prevalent, except in third world countries. There's about 1.5 million cases worldwide today. But, during the times of the Bible, leprosy was very prevalent. In fact, so much so, that the Bible gives very clear direction on how to deal with it when it occurs. **Turn in your Bibles to Leviticus chapter 13.** (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus).

We'll see prescribed in the law, great detail on how to deal with leprosy. In fact, you might notice, as you arrive to chapter 13, that all of that chapter and all of 14 deal with leprosy. So, this was a big deal! **Look at 13:1...**

Leviticus 13:1-3

1 The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, **2** "When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a case of leprous disease on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests, **3** and the priest shall examine the diseased area on the skin of his body. And if the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a case of leprous disease. When the priest has examined him, he shall pronounce him unclean.

Now skip down to verse 45...

Leviticus 13:45-46

45 "The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.' **46** He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.

Folks, that last verse is the horribleness of this disease.

Now go back with me to Luke 17, verse 12 and we'll see that these 10 men were obeying this law by standing at a distance.

Luke 17:12

¹² And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance.

They were following the Mosaic Law and the horror of horrors of this disease, (in my opinion), is the separation from everyone...but most specifically the terrifying fact that you lose your ability to be with your family...the people you needed most, they couldn't get near you, because you were so contagious!

Can you imagine contracting this disease and seeing those white splotches show up on your skin and you realize you've got it? Can you imagine having to tell your wife and children goodbye? Literally you would live the rest of your life as an exile...like an alien. I can only imagine the horrific misery these people endured...not only the physical misery, but the misery believing that you've been cursed by God to the point you've lost everything...including your family. Oh the misery!!!

So, here are these 10 men standing at a distance and they seek to get Jesus' attention (much like what we saw with Bartimaeus and his friend last week).

Luke 17:13

¹³ and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." (No exclamation point.)

Isn't that what we saw last week? Bart and his buddy shouting for mercy. But, here's what struck me as I read verse 13. Luke says, "They lifted up their voices." Remember, their larynxes were pretty much shot. They didn't have much of a voice. But, through their desperation they strained to call out to Jesus. It's like we saw last week...Jesus is passing by and this is their last chance and they're desperate... Remember the picture...



And so they cried out with all they had: "Master." That's a Greek term that signifies "great respect for someone in noble authority." In essence when you called someone "Master," you were calling them: "nobility." They recognized Jesus was no ordinary man. They saw Him in the role of a King.

Can I ask you a question: How do you see Jesus? Is He your King, your Master? What is Jesus to you? What do you call Jesus? You have a voice. Do you raise your voice to call Him: "Master." Are you afraid to raise your voice publicly to call Him: "Master." Remember, there is no salvation without confession...public confession that Jesus is Lord must be made in order for biblical salvation to occur. What do you call Jesus? Are you afraid of what others might say, if you proclaim His name too loudly? These men lifted their voices and they didn't care who heard. "Master, have mercy on us." They were desperate!

What did Jesus do?

Luke 17:14

¹⁴ When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed.

"Go show yourselves to the priests." Why? Well, this was expected for anyone claiming to have been relieved of leprosy... The priests had to say you were clean. Why? So, that you could be restored to your synagogue. Because of your disease, you were considered unclean and not allowed to attend the synagogue. They had a list of lepers. And in order to be reinstated, you had to have a letter from the priest.

Jesus gave them a command... "Go." And do you know what? Are you listening? **He expected them to go.** It was a command! BUT WAIT!!! Were they healed before they went? No! See it...

Luke 17:14b

¹⁴ And as they went they were cleansed.

As they went they were cleansed... iaomai (EE-ah-OH-my). What does that mean? Simple...they had to obey before the healing came. Wait a minute... Does Jesus actually expect us to obey? After all...in our watered down Gospel culture...I hear a lot that Jesus is our buddy in the sky, who is our pal and will forgive us no matter what we do or say. I mean after all...we're only human...does He really expect obedience? YES!!! We see it right here!

As they went they were healed... They had to obey first! That's what you do for a Master right? Don't you obey your Master? Don't Kings expect obedience from their people? Yes! Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Are you obeying Jesus? Really? Are you really and truly obeying Jesus in your life by how you're living? Be honest!

Let me ask you another question. Do you expect Jesus to do stuff for you? Do you want Him to bring healing (blessings) into your life? There's a requirement. Obedience. What did the men have to do before they received the healing? They had to obey Jesus' command and go!

Now, before you get uptight and think I'm preaching legalism is this culture of cheap grace we live in...understand I'm simply teaching the Bible. I'm teaching what Jesus said. If you love me, you will deny yourself and take up your cross and following me. And truly following Jesus and being His disciples means obedience...it's no different from what a parent expects from a child.

Yet, so many Christians wonder why they are living lives of impotence. No power. No joy. Little, if any fulfillment. Could it be that we're not being obedient and that lack of obedience has created a void, a disconnect in our lives.

Take a look at this picture...How well is this bicycle going to work? Take a look...



Not at all, right? That's because a bicycle is useless with a disobedient chain. The chain has to obey the sprocket for the bicycle to work. There's a lot of Christians like chains who aren't obeying the sprocket... We're like chains that want to go our own way. We don't want to fit into any sprocket. I'll do my own thing. I don't need no church, no preacher, no Bible telling me what to do. Okay. Have it your way...but, you'll never get anywhere. You most coast a while...but, eventually you're going to come to a dead stop.

What's the sprocket? See the picture...IF we're the chain...what's the sprocket?



It's the Word of God. And if we choose not to follow it and see it as our authority...because it is Jesus' commands to us...then we'll struggle mightily in this life.

Well...what an amazing scene...can you imagine...as they walked away...cartilage started growing back around their ear holes and a nose began to form...fingers and toes popped back out and rough, **ulcerated skin became smooth and new like a baby's.** Wow! Can you imagine!

So, what happened next?

Luke 17:15

¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice;

Wait a minute...one is coming back. He saw that he had been healed and he came back and with a loud voice (that had no rasp in it) he was praising God... He couldn't restrain himself! He's not limping back on feet with no toes...he's not using a crutch anymore...he's brand new...he's running...and he runs back to Jesus and he falls on his face before Jesus...

Luke 17:16a

¹⁶ and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks.

The words "giving him thanks" is one Greek word: "**Eucharisteo**" and every time it's used in the New Testament, (37 times), it is used to direct thanks to God. Do you know what that leper was acknowledging? The fact that Jesus was God. That's why it says in verse 15 that he was "praising God with a loud voice." And what's more amazing is the last phrase in verse 16...Luke tells us is that this man was a **Samaritan**.

Luke 17:16b

¹⁶ Now he was a Samaritan.

What's a Samaritan? Oh, they were considered the half-breeds...part-Jew, part-Gentile and therefore neither the Jews nor the Gentiles wanted anything to do with them. And so, they already felt left out and treated like aliens. So, here's a Samaritan falling down at the feet of a Jew. In fact, verses 17 and 18 actually imply that the other nine might have been Jews themselves... Watch...

Luke 17:17-18

¹⁷ Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? ¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"

"Except this foreigner." Does that seem crass to you. Imagine the guy down on his knees at Jesus feet and Jesus calls him a "foreigner."



No, Jesus wasn't being mean...He was simply pointing out the power in what this man, a Samaritan, was doing. #1...he was not afraid to fall at the feet of a Jew and #2...he actually acknowledged Jesus as "Master and God." And that courageous boldness!

And let me remind you again, dear church, it will take courage to follow Jesus. It will take courage to publicly confess Jesus before others. It will take courage to humble yourself and submit to His lordship in your life **and to praise Him in thanksgiving!** But, oh church family...I want you to see the power when you do.

Luke 17:19

¹⁹ And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

Folks, this is exactly what happened with Blind Bartimaeus last week. The same word for "made you well" was used with this leper that Jesus used with Bartimaeus. That word in the Greek is "sozo," and it means "salvation." In fact, there is a little "#4" in my Bible that says at the bottom of the page that phrase can be translated: "has saved you." That's the more accurate translation in my opinion, based on the word: SOZO. The man was made whole...he was saved!!

The man got saved. And that's exactly what happened to five people here last week. They had the courage to call on the name of the Lord!

So, let's do the math...90% of the lepers walked away...90%...that's a big number...Yeah...they were healed...but, they didn't get saved. That's a big deal with eternal repercussions. Only one...the Samaritan...and he was saved. You know it seems the other 9 got what they wanted. They wanted to be healed and they were...but, that's where it all stopped.

What about you today? Are you just seeking the blessings from God and once you get them, will you be like the 90% and just walk away? Boy, it's easy to do that isn't it? Just treat God like some cosmic genie in the sky...throw Him a few quick prayers...rub on the lamp...and hope to get blessed. And you know what...when we do that...we have no power in our lives. And this is how most Christians live. A life that's like a spiritual yo-yo...up and down. They are in and out of church...they aren't very committed...and yet, they want the blessings of God and they get very

upset and disillusioned when He doesn't spit them out. **Is it possible that we're like the 9 lepers who were healed and yet, weren't thankful?**

Could it be that "thanksgiving" is the key to unleashing the power of God in our lives? **Could it be** that when we humble ourselves and fall on our faces before Him that we find that the REAL BLESSING we need is to simply be at the feet of Jesus...to be in His presence. **Could it be** that it's not the promotion...the new job...painting the house...a boyfriend...the next "fun thing" that's going to bring us fulfillment. **Could it be** that Jesus and Jesus alone is the only one who can totally satisfy the human heart. **And could it be** that when we come to Him in thankfulness...that's like pulling the pin in the grenade of God's power for our lives! The answer to all of those questions is: Yes.

That 10th leper realized that he had been in the presence of Almighty God...and he was thankful and he wanted more. I pray today that you and I will understand that we too, right now, are in the presence of Almighty God (His Holy Spirit is moving through this room) and I pray that we too might come and fall at His feet in thanksgiving...just humble, grateful thanksgiving for all He's done!
