

Thanksgiving-“Having a Thankful Heart” Luke 17:11-19

11.21.21

Jesus cleansed that leper and that man was **so thankful!** Wouldn't that **be an understatement!** I'm certain the joy and gratitude he felt had to be almost more than he could contain.

A leper...a man who was exiled from the community...his family...everything he knew... He couldn't get near anyone who was clean without shouting: “Unclean, unclean,” as a warning! Now this man has been cleansed and he can go home. He has his life back. Church, that's a picture of salvation. We come to Jesus hopelessly stained, (not with leprosy), but with something much worse...something that can damn our soul to Hell: sin. No, it isn't visible like leprosy on the outside...but, stains the soul on the inside. Without Jesus there is no hope! Yet, when we come to Him and fall at His feet and say, “Lord, please save me!” that's when we get our life back and that's when we can truly know joy!

Today is the Sunday before Thanksgiving and we should most certainly be thankful...most thankful to the Lord Jesus for saving our souls! Amen? But are we? You say, “I'm thankful for my salvation...yes, I am.” That's good...but, in general...are we thankful? Are we a “thankful people” or more apt to complain or be critical... Critical to the Lord for somehow not measuring up to our expectations? Are we a thankful people?

Today we're going to see more lepers...10 of them...yet, only one was thankful. The title of today's message is: **“Having a Thankful Heart.”**

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. And 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. Jesus desires for us to live thankful lives...not just the week of Thanksgiving! He wants us to express our thankfulness for all that He does every day, day in and day out. How do I know this? Scripture tells us:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

So, are we a thankful people or anxious? Most of us live anxious lives, but we don't have to. Screens:

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Truly, church family, I believe “thanksgiving” is the key to life...it’s the key to not being anxious...it’s the key to not being overwhelmed by our circumstances. So, why is it so hard to be thankful? Let’s see from our text this morning...look back at verse 11.

Luke 17:11-12

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.

Did you see in the video that was made by *The Chosen* (I love that series, it’s free) how the disciples stood at a distance...one even covered his mouth? That’s because of the contagiousness of leprosy. We know leprosy is an extremely infectious skin disease. Leprosy causes the nerve endings in the body to die AND with the accompanying loss of feeling due to this, the person begins to destroy his own skin tissue because they can’t feel anything in that area of the body. So, over time, they begin to rub off those diseased parts, like the ends of their fingers, toes and particularly the areas of the body with cartilage... like the ears, nose and even lips.

Leprosy can also destroy the eyes, causing blindness; and can penetrate the teeth so, they fall out. Often times, leprosy affects the larynx (the voice box) so that a person winds up with a very weak or raspy voice. Ultimately as your flesh rots...there is a terrible stench...a smell that is almost unbearable. Thus, lepers wrap themselves in cloths trying to soak up the smell. The smell around a leper’s colony was unreal. Thankfully today, leprosy is not prevalent, except in third world countries. But, during Bible times, leprosy was widespread.

So, these men were standing at a distance. They were following the Mosaic Law, which dictated you couldn’t get near them. Think about it, 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...knowing you would most likely have to live the rest of your life as an exile...separated from them? I can only imagine the horrific misery these people endured...not only the physical misery, but the emotional and mental misery...believing that you’ve somehow been cursed by God (that’s what the Jews believed) to the point you’ve lost everything you once knew.

So, they stand at distance...and Jesus comes by and they risk it...getting near enough to speak...

Luke 17:13

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

“They lifted up their voices,” but their larynxes were shot. They didn’t have much of a voice. But, in their desperation they strained to call out to Jesus. And you know what...that’s what it means to “call on the name of the Lord.” Romans 10:13...is to call out like a drowning man! They called out: “Master.” That’s a Greek term signifying “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 noble King.

Can I ask you a question: How do you see Jesus today? Is He your Master? Who is Jesus to you? You have a voice. Do you raise your voice to call Him, “Master,” or are you afraid to raise your voice publicly to say He’s “Master?” Are you afraid of what others might say if you proclaim His name too loudly...proclaim what He teaches (which goes totally against this pagan culture) too

loudly? These men lifted their voices and they didn't care who heard them! "Master, have mercy on us." They were desperate! And that's what it takes to truly make a life change...desperation. We don't usually make changes until we're desperate...until we're sick and tired of being sick and tired with what's going on in our lives. **So, 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 cleansed of leprosy... The priests had to say you were clean. Why? So, that you could be restored to your synagogue. (And this rarely happened.) You see, because you were considered unclean, you were not allowed to attend the synagogue. The leaders of the synagogue had a list of lepers, and in order to be reinstated, you had to have a letter from the priest. So, Jesus gave them a command: "Go." **He expected them to go.** Are they healed yet? Nope! What had to happen first? They had to obey Him to be cleansed... See it again...see the last part of the verse.

Luke 17:14b

¹⁴ And as they went they were cleansed.

They were "cleansed"... iaomai (E-ah-OH-my). It even sounds like what happened to them! It's **onomatopoeic**, meaning it sounds like what it is...like "sizzle or buzz or hiss." **(E-ah-OH-my)**. **CLEANSED!** But, they had to obey before the healing came. Church, Jesus actually expects us to obey! Yes, in our anything goes, watered-down, culture Jesus **ACTUALLY EXPECTS US TO OBEY**.

That's what you do for a Master, right? You obey your Master! Kings expect obedience from their people? 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 Jesus to bring blessings into your life? If you do...then you'll obey Him and His Word.

Oh, what an amazing scene...can you imagine...as they walked away...the skin healed, cartilage started growing back around their ear holes and a nose began to form...fingers and toes popped back out...**ulcerated skin became smooth and new again!** Wow! Verse 15...

Luke 17:15

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

One is coming back. He saw that he had been healed and he came back and with a **loud voice** (it had no rasp to it, the larynx had been healed!) he was praising God! He couldn't restrain himself! He's not limping back on feet with no toes. He's brand new! Verse 16...

Luke 17:16a

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

The 3 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 Almighty God. That's what the leper acknowledged? The fact that Jesus is God. And then we find out who this man is: he's a **Samaritan...**

Luke 17:16b

¹⁶ Now he was a Samaritan.

What's a Samaritan? "Half-breeds" to the people of that day...part-Jew, part-Gentile; therefore, neither the Jews nor the Gentiles wanted anything to do with these people. And so, they already felt like outcasts. So, here's a Samaritan falling down at the feet of **a Jew**, Jesus. Verse 17...

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?"

The Samaritan returns and offers Jesus "thanks." So, that's the end of the story, right? No. The man had ONLY BEEN HEALED PHYSICALLY. Right? He's not a leper any longer, but he's still a sinner!

Luke 17:19

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

The phrase: "made you well" is the Greek is "sozo," and it means "salvation." In fact, there is a little "#4" in my Bible, at the bottom of the page, and that phrase can be translated: "your faith 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!! Yes, he had been healed physically, but that means nothing in eternity. What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and yet loses his own soul?

Think of this now: Literally a thankful heart brought him salvation. He came back thankful and walked away saved. So, let's do the math...90% of the lepers walked away...9 out of 10! **That's a big number**. 10 were healed...but, only one got saved. But, you know what...it seems the other 9 got what they wanted...to be healed and that's where it all stopped.

Can I ask you a question? What are you here for? No...not, why did you come today? No, in the light of eternity...what are you here for? Considering the fact that there is an eternal Hell...what are you here for? Why do you exist? Is it just to be happy?

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

²⁹ This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, ³⁰ and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, ³¹ and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

This world is passing away and we need to get busy and understand what we're actually here for? And I can promise you, it's not just so we can be happy? Listen, I look at a lot of people's lives and see folks trying so hard to get all than can in this life...chasing the stuff of this life...and I'm telling you...there is more to this life than the pursuit of the next fun thing or STUFF. Listen, those 9 men got what they wanted and went on their way...but the Samaritan came back to Jesus. He came back thankful and got a whole lot more than health! He got eternal life...deliverance from Hell!

Listen, this morning, perhaps you need to come back to Jesus...I know many of you have been saved...but, church, if we aren't careful, we'll live for this world... We can get stuck in the rut of living just like the world...and that makes us almost worthless for the Kingdom. I see a lot of people that way. They do next to nothing for their so-called Master. They do nothing for His kingdom!

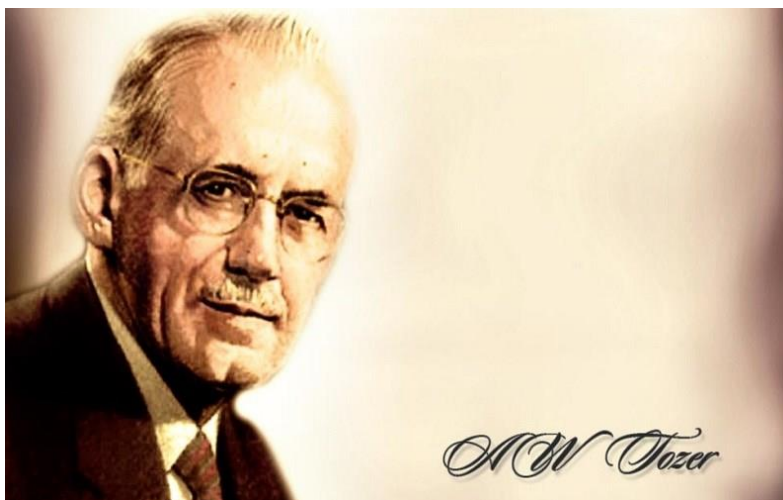
Listen, there is a purpose in this life that's so much higher than what most of us are living for. Brothers and sisters, we're to be on a mission...a mission to grow the kingdom of Christ. "Go and make disciples of all nation, right?" That's Center 5:20...



20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.

So, what are you doing to that end? If we're working to that end...that high calling...that exalted mission, then we will live our lives complaining about the little stuff...we'll be sad, moody, critical and unthankful! But, if we're on mission for Jesus, we won't have time for that petty stuff!

Sports teams have figured this out. They know that it's all about the mission...not sitting in a circle singing Kumbaya. Does anybody care if the team is happy about running sprints...no...people want them to win. The goal is to win! The mission is to win. And church family, the mission for us as Christians is to win people to Jesus...to go and make disciples...and the reason so many Christians are so unthankful and so unfulfilled...is because they're not living for the Master and His mission! They're living for themselves. And that's why we whine and complain...and are like a boat adrift on the ocean with no sail...because we're living beneath what Jesus made us for! AW Tozer said:



“Today there is a broad and irresponsible pursuit of happiness and most people would rather be happy than feel the wounds of other people’s sorrows, as Jesus did. This is borne out by an almost pathological pursuit of happiness by the crowds. But they miss the true Source of joy and satisfaction. They are so engrossed in their own lives that their hearts are calloused and insensitive to the needs of others.” AW Tozer (source: *Spiritual Discipleship*, Oswald J. Sanders)

This man I know: Tim Miller says, “We won’t share the Gospel with others until we’re thankful!” He’s right! Are you thankful for your salvation? When we truly are...we’ll share the Gospel with others.

So, let me ask you: What’s the mission for your family? The next fun thing? For everyone to be happy? To make money? Have nice stuff? Church, we’ve got so much of this backwards. Listen, a great marriage is secondary in this life to the mission...a great family is secondary in this life to the mission...a great career is secondary in this life to the mission...the mission is what’s most important!

Seek first the Kingdom of God...Matthew 6:33!! And yet, if we’re not careful we’ll put more emphasis on the marriage, the family life, the career (all good things), but actually place the work of Jesus and His mission way down the list. Oh, if we’ll seek first his kingdom, then the rest of all these things will come in fullness. That’s Colossians 3:23...

Colossians 3:23-24

²³Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Are you doing what you’re doing for the glory of Christ? When is the last time you thought about: is my marriage bringing glory to God? Is my job bringing glory to God? Are my kids bringing glory to God? Church, God’s glory is at stake in how we’re living before this world! We represent Him because He’s our Master. Therefore, God’s glory is at stake in my marriage and in my family, in my job. God’s glory is at stake...and only ONE leper got that right and he gave Him praise, thanksgiving!

Take a look at the screens. This is Joni Eareckson Tada.



She is a quadriplegic. She can’t do anything for herself. She was injured in a swimming/diving accident when she was a teenager. She’s been in this condition for over 40 years. She said this about her life in wheelchair... (Now park your brain around her thankfulness.)

“I realized that the stakes were far greater, far more immense and cosmic than merely my satisfaction with a wheelchair and its unpleasant baggage. I’ve learned to shift my focus onto God. His glory is at stake and that made my satisfaction in Him, not satisfaction with the way things are, the real issue in my life. It is no longer a matter of me being content with

my life. It is a matter of finding Him utterly and supremely the source of all contentment. This, much to my delight, gives Him the greatest glory.” Joni Eareckson Tada

Can you imagine waking up...opening your eyes and realizing you are totally dependent on someone else to get you out of bed so you can sit on the toilet...to fix your hair...to bathe you...feed you?” And yet, she’s thankful! And that makes we want to cry.

God’s glory is at stake...and yet we concern ourselves and argue about the silliest things in our lives. Things that have no eternal consequences. It’s time to be thankful! Truly thankful!

I want to show you the lyrics of what we’ll be singing... I want us to get these lyrics in our minds...

**I was a wretch
I remember who I was
I was lost, I was blind
I was running out of time**

**Sin separated
The breach was far too wide
But from the far side of the chasm
You held me in your sight**

**So You made a way
Across the great divide
Left behind Heaven’s throne
To build it here inside**

**And there at the cross
You paid the debt I owed
Broke my chains, freed my soul
For the first time I had hope**

**Thank you Jesus for the blood applied
Thank you Jesus it has washed me white
Thank you Jesus You have saved my life
Brought me from the darkness into glorious light**

**You took my place
Laid inside my tomb of sin
You were buried for three days
But then You walked right out again**

**And now death has no sting
And life has no end
For I have been transformed
By the blood of the lamb**

**Thank You Jesus for the blood applied
Thank You Jesus it has washed me white**

**Thank You Jesus You have saved my life
Brought me from the darkness into glorious light**

Before we sing, I want to remind us of this: You are not your own, you were bought at price! As a follower of Jesus...He owns you and He's your Master. Are you living like He is, or are you still seeking JUST the blessings and NOT the Father from where those blessings have come? Are you living like the 9 lepers?

For some...maybe today you are finally tired of living life for yourself. Tired of your life being like an emotional and spiritual roller coaster. Tired of being apathetic and uncommitted...in and out of church, in and out of the Bible...weak in prayer? Not on mission! If that's you, come back to Jesus and be thankful! Let's sing AND BE THANKFUL!
