

## **Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.**

**April 28, 2024. "Simple Prayers of a Commoner: Thanks!"**

### **I Intro.**

Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. We don't want you to miss out on anything. So, make sure you stay connected to keep informed. We hope you are fed and ministered to by NCC, and that you can be an essential part of us moving forward. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

### **II Recap.**

This entire series is a look at simple prayers we can utter. Not having to have this fancy theology or understanding in place. But just communicating with God. And these prayers will connect us to God in a way that opens something up inside of us, and allows God to reveal larger truths to us. The first week we unpacked the prayer "*Help*". The second week we asked one of the most common and heartfelt of all questions. "*Why?*" Last week we talked about experiencing awe and wonder in the prayer of "*WOW!*" Today we finish with the important prayer of "*Thanks!*"

### **III Sunday.**

Our last simple prayer is a common and small word. But is the foundation for experiencing the life devoted to God many of us want from our faith. "*Thanks*". Some questions before we hit the scripture.

**What does practicing thankfulness mean and look like for you?**

**What challenges your ability to pray "*Thanks*"? What helps you to pray "*Thanks*"?**

Before we dive into the scripture and unpack it, I want to propose that for many of us it's not that we aren't thankful enough. We will express a thank you for the simplest and most common things in our lives. The problem may be that we do "*Thanks*" so often it's such a familiar part of our day to day life, that we don't feel what it really means. Our "*Thanks*" doesn't foster a continually growing sense of gratitude within us. We send up so many little 'bottle rocket' statements of "*Thanks*" that we may not even realize it at the moment. The purpose of this service will be to challenge us at whatever level of gratefulness we practice, we can grow in our intentionality and awareness of our living fully into our prayers of "*Thanks*". Our scripture is **Luke 17:11-19**. Read it and we'll unpack it.

**What jumped out to you from this passage?**

**How did it speak to you about the prayer of "*Thanks*"?**

**What specific truths did you pull about the prayer of "*Thanks*" from it?**

**How to grow your "*Thanks*" from this passage.**

**1. “Thanks” begins by recognizing the realities of life.** There are a couple of phrases that are important here. *“They kept their distance.”* *“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”* These lepers fully understood and accepted what life was like for them. “Thanks” is always born out of accepting that life is just hard. All ten of them were going even if they wouldn’t be allowed in the presence of the priest. To begin to live a truly *“Thanks”* life there has to be a reckoning with where we are in life.

**2. Live in “Thanks” even when you can’t see or feel it.** All ten of these people left to go see the priests to be declared clean without actually knowing they were clean. This is such a profound act of living in *“Thanks”*, without having any evidence of having anything to be thankful for. This is the account of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who declared; *“even if we are not rescued from this fire our faith in God will remain”*. This type of *“Thanks”* is living in; *“even if...”*. This is an extra practice of *“Thanks”*. To be thankful when we don’t see or feel evidence yet.

**3. Don’t let others define your “Thanks”.** We see the one leper wasn’t held back by the other nine who didn’t feel any felt need to show *“Thanks”*. What does it take for us to not let the crowd influence us? Learn to be and live boldly in your *“Thanks”*. But even more so; Why was the Samaritan who was going to the priest? He wasn’t allowed or accepted by the religious practices of the Jews and this meant he wasn’t allowed in the synagogue. How much do we let the influence of others steal our *“Thanks”*? In our grievance and outrage society that promotes entitlement and privilege over gratitude, be the one who pushes against that, and can live in *“Thanks”*.

**4. Realize. Turn around. Come back. Praise- “Thanks”.** Living in *“Thanks”* requires...demands us to actually do stuff. We tend to reduce following Jesus as just believing things. We often throw *“Thanks”* around so casually and lightly that we miss the depth of what it really means. Real *“Thanks”* is hard and demands from us. Two truth bombs. **Gratitude not expressed feels like ingratitude. Entitlement begins at the end of gratitude.** This happens to all of us. Those two truths should be enough to encourage us to live differently than others around us.

**5. “Thanks” saves.** I know this will sound somewhat heretical. I’ll let you wrestle with this passage. The nine others were healed. This man was healed AND saved. Saving is a much bigger and more earthly word than we often will entertain. In Mark 2 we see the story of four men who lower a paralyzed man into a house to see Jesus. First, we don’t know if they were his friends or not. Could have been his servants. But in the account the paralyzed person’s sins were forgiven by the faith of the other four. There is salvation work, being made whole, healed, that happens now. We have to make sure our *“Thanks”* does the work of healing, making whole, saves us...TODAY!

#### **IV Challenge.**

Embracing a mindset of gratitude is not just a sentiment. But a transformative way of living that enriches every aspect of our lives. By cultivating gratitude, living fully in the prayer of *“Thanks”*, we shift our focus from what we lack to what we have, fostering contentment, resilience, and a deeper appreciation for life’s blessings, both big and small. Living in “Thanks” opens our hearts to joy, strengthens our relationships, and nourishes our spirits amidst life’s challenges. It is a powerful reminder that even in the darkest moments, there is always something to pray *“Thanks”* for. So, let’s strive to live out the prayer of *“Thanks”* in our thoughts, words, and actions, embracing each day with a heart full of thanksgiving and a spirit of abundance.