

### Thanksgiving 2023

Thanksgiving is a time to gather with family, eat food, but most importantly it is a reminder that we are to give thanks. For believers' thanksgiving should not be a once-a-year holiday. We have been called to live a life of giving thanks.

#### 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 ESV

- (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.**

Often, we wonder what God's will for us is in a specific situation. I love verses like this that directly tell us what God's will is. We have been called to give thanks in all circumstances. This passage shows the link between worship, prayer and giving thanks. These three commands rely on each other. **Living a life of worship is a life in response to who God is and what He has done for us.** It is only possible when we spend time in prayer with Him giving thanks. As we focus on giving thanks, I want to look at a story of Jesus from the gospel of Luke.

#### Luke 17:11-19 ESV

- (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."

As Jesus was traveling between Samaria and Galilee He comes to an unnamed village. Outside the village there are ten lepers who had to keep their distance from anyone healthy. They were instructed by the law to announce their presence.

#### Leviticus 13:44-46 ESV

- (44) he is a leprous man, he is unclean. **The priest must pronounce him unclean;** his disease is on his head.
- (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.**

The Old Testament law gave detailed instructions on how to handle all sorts of skin infections and diseases that were called leprosy. These instructions were practical in that they helped prevent the spread of these illness among the people of Israel. They also pointed to the purity and holiness that was needed to be a people in God's presence. God's presence dwelled in the Holy of Holies and the people of Israel were called to purity in every part of their life because He was present.

**These lepers at some point had gone to the priest and been declared unclean.** They had to separate from their family and friends and live isolated. Daily they had to be humiliated by announcing their uncleanliness. Daily they watched people avoid them and go out of their way to keep a safe distance. Then they saw Jesus come into the town and they called out from a distance.

#### **Luke 17:13 ESV**

(13) and **lifted up their voices**, saying, "Jesus, Master, **have mercy on us.**"

They were not allowed to approach anyone so they called out to Jesus. They needed His mercy. They needed Jesus to show compassion and care to the outcast and isolated. His response would have surprised them.

#### **Luke 17:14 ESV**

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

Jesus' answer must have been confusing to these lepers. He tells them to go to the priest. The priest had the authority to declare someone unclean and they had the authority to declare someone clean. Leviticus 14 gives the detailed instructions of what sacrifices to perform when someone was healed of their disease. **The question was what would the priest be saying this time?** Would they declare the men to be clean and offer sacrifices or declare them unclean and send them out again?

These lepers stood there with a choice to make. As far as they could see their disease was still there, and they would be called unclean again, but Jesus told them to go. These men trusted and decided to obey what Jesus said. As they started heading to the priest they were cleansed. What a flood of emotions this must have been. Jesus had healed them! Joy and excitement must have flooded their minds as they raced to see the priest and be declared clean. But notice what one of the lepers does before He ever reaches the priests.

#### **Luke 17:15 ESV**

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

The healing happened before they ever reached the priest. The moment this man saw He was healed, He turns back. This was not out of unbelief or disobedience but a heart of worship and gratitude. He is praising God with a loud voice. He is worshipping from his heart. He knows what God has done for Him. Worship is a response to who God is and what He has done.

### **Psalm 95:1-7 ESV**

- (1) Oh come, **let us sing to the LORD**; let us make a joyful noise **to the rock of our salvation!**
- (2) Let us come into His presence **with thanksgiving**; let us make a joyful noise to Him **with songs of praise!**
- (3) **For** the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.
- (4) In His hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are His also.
- (5) The sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land.
- (6) **Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!**
- (7) **For He is our God**, and **we are the people of His pasture**, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you hear His voice,

The Psalmist is singing and worshipping to God with thanksgiving. This worship and praise are based on the truth of who God is. He starts in verse 3 to describe how amazing God is, and then is overwhelmed by the thought in verse 7 that we are His people. This almighty God that deserves all praise and worship is personal and has a relationship with us. We have so much to be thankful for and worship God for. When we start to view God this way, we become worshipers. **We are less focused on what we can do for Him and more focused on praising and giving thanks for what He has done.**

### **Psalms 146:1-6 NLT**

- (1) Praise the LORD! **Let all that I am praise the LORD.**
- (2) **I will praise the LORD as long as I live.** I will sing praises to my God with my dying breath.
- (3) Don't put your confidence in powerful people; there is no help for you there.
- (4) When they breathe their last, they return to the earth, and all their plans die with them.
- (5) But **joyful are those** who have the God of Israel as their helper, **whose hope is in the LORD their God.**
- (6) He made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. **He keeps every promise forever.**

This Psalmist wants to praise God with everything He has. He knows that man will fail. There is no lasting hope or joy in what man can accomplish. But as people who trust in the one true God, we have every reason to have joy and give thanks. **The God of the universe who made everything, wants a personal relationship.** He keeps every promise. We worship and give thanks to Him. The leper that turned back has a heart of gratitude and worship. He is amazed at what God has done for Him. He worships Jesus as God.

### Luke 17:15-16 ESV

(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.

He worshipped God at the feet of Jesus. He gave thanks because he understood that only God could heal. He knew that Jesus was God. Jesus does not turn away this praise. Notice how immediate this praise and thanks comes. **If we do not give thanks quickly, we tend not to at all.** We become distracted, and lose sight of what we had to be thankful for in the first place This leper does not let that happen. He goes back to worship immediately. We are given an important detail about this man who turned back, He was a Samaritan.

### Luke 17:17-18 ESV

(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?"**

Ten lepers turned to present themselves to the priest. Ten lepers were healed. Only one worships and gives thanks. The implication is that the other lepers were not foreigners but Jews. Only the Samaritan returned. Where are the other nine? We are not told what the other nine did. After presenting themselves to the priest some might have gone to their family they missed so much. Others might have been interrogated by the priests wondering who healed them. Each became focused on something else and not the one who just healed them. Often in our own lives we can tend to be the other nine lepers. We are amazed at what Jesus has done in our lives but we do not take time to thank and worship Him.

One of the reasons for ungratefulness in scripture is we do not want to honor God for who He is. To give thanks to Jesus for healing them, the lepers were admitting their helplessness. They could not take credit for any part of the healing. Thanking Jesus would honor Him as God.

### Romans 1:18-25 ESV

(21) For although they knew God, **they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking**, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

(22) Claiming to be wise, they became fools,

(23) and **exchanged the glory of the immortal God** for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

(24) Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,

(25) because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and **worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator**, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Lost man does not want to honor and give thanks to God. We are so adamant about relying on ourselves that we would exchange the glory of the immortal God for man made images. **We emphasize the creation over the creator.** Our society struggles to give thanks because it begs the question, who are we thanking? True gratitude and thanksgiving honors God. It recognizes the honor and glory God deserves. Instead, our we want to rely on ourself/ creation. **We do not have much to be thankful for when we think we have done everything by our own strength.** It is not an accident that the Jewish lepers do not come back to give thanks. They started to rely on themselves, and as they became distracted, they focused on the creation instead of the creator who had just healed them. They missed the true healing that was offered that day. Notice how Jesus responds to the one leper who came back. The Samaritan who in humility came back to worship. He was willing to honor Jesus as God.

### **Luke 17:19 ESV**

(19) And He said to him, "Rise and go your way; **your faith has made you well.**"

The man's leprosy has already been healed when Jesus says this. The other 9 lepers were healed physically as well. **Jesus is not talking about the physical.** The Samaritan leper was spiritually healed because He believed in Jesus. He was worshipping Jesus as God. **What a tragedy that the other 9 left physically well that day but spiritually dead.** One of the amazing things about giving thanks is it draws us to the eternal. It was the grateful leper who found what was eternally important that day. Look how Jesus pointed His disciples to rejoice in eternal things not earthly things.

### **Luke 10:17-20 ESV**

(17) The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name!"

(18) And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

(19) Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.

(20) Nevertheless, **do not rejoice in this**, that the spirits are subject to you, **but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.**"

The 72 had gone out to proclaim the kingdom. While they were sharing this message God empowered them in unique ways to verify what they said. The 72 were so excited that they could cast out demons but Jesus says they have something much greater to give praise for. Their names are written down in the Lamb's book of life. These disciples were not wrong to be excited that the demons were subject to them. But in light of eternity nothing compares to the salvation that Jesus offers us. **The greatest thing you and I have to give thanks for today, is that our eternity is secure because of the shed blood of Jesus.** Everything else is secondary. Reminding ourselves of what Jesus has accomplished for us draws our hearts to eternal things.

### Philippians 4:4-7 ESV

- (4) **Rejoice in the Lord always**; again I will say, rejoice.  
 (5) Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. **The Lord is at hand**;  
 (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.

Notice again that rejoicing, praying, and giving thanks are linked together again. We are to be full of joy because of how great our God is. This makes all the difference as we go through difficult situations. Trials and hardships that we could not imagine are given proper perspective when we remind ourselves that the Lord is at hand. We have the privilege to offer our prayers to the God who created everything. He is so personal and intimate with us that He wants to hear what is worrying and bothering us.

**Our prayers are given proper perspective as we give thanks with them.** We give thanks for what Jesus accomplished on the cross. We give thanks for His tremendous grace to us. We give thanks that He is near and has not abandoned us even if it might feel like it. We give thanks that He listen and answers our prayers. David gives us an example of this in Psalm 31. He lifts His request to God right alongside His thanksgiving for who God is and what God has done.

### Psalms 31:7-10 ESV

- (7) **I will rejoice and be glad in Your steadfast love, because You have seen my affliction**; You have known the distress of my soul, (8) and You have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a broad place. (9) **Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress**; my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also. (10) For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away.

David gives thanks for God's steadfast love. **This is a comfort because God's steadfast love is not a theoretical thing, He has seen David's affliction.** David can trust that God will be loving and good to him. After He give thanks, He lifts His request to God and share the anguish and distress he has been in. David is hurting.

### Psalms 31:14 & 19 ESV

- (14) **But I trust in You**, O LORD; I say, "You are my God."  
 (19) **Oh, how abundant is Your goodness**, which You have stored up for those who fear You and worked for those who take refuge in You, in the sight of the children of mankind!

We have so much to be thankful for because God has been so good to us.