

Just Say Thank You

Luke 17:11-17

Six seconds. That's all it took for Bob Beamon to leap into history. That's all it took for the slender 22-year-old long jumper to speed 19 strides down the runway, ascend to a height of six feet, stay up in the air like a bird and finally land an incomprehensible 29 feet and 2½ inches later. At the 1968 Olympic Games on October 18, 1968, in Mexico City, 22-year-old long jumper Bob Beamon won a gold medal and set a new world record by jumping 29 feet, 2-½-inches. In the prior 100 years, the world record had been broken 13 times by an average of 2-½-inches. Bob Beamon destroyed the record by nearly two feet! It took 20 minutes to confirm it because Bob Beamon had outjumped the electronic measuring device and they had to go get an old fashioned tape measure to measure the jump. That jump was so unbelievable and so improbable, it became known as *The Jump*. But like many great stories, there is an even better backstory. Bob Beamon fouled on his first two attempts, nearly missing the finals. Before his third and final attempt, his teammate, Ralph Boston, pulled him aside and whispered in his ear: *"Take off early! You have room to spare. Give 'em two inches on the front. You'll take two feet when you land. Your legs have never been as strong as they are now. At this moment, your body weighs nothing. Your mind has wings. Use them. Fly up. Fly out."* - Ralph Boston

Ralph Boston's words were Bob Beamon's wings! Three thousand years ago, King Solomon said, *"The power of life and death is in the tongue."* Proverbs 18:21

Words can function as self-fulfilling prophecies. Words have great power. Often the words we don't express enough is gratitude. When it comes to expressing our gratitude to each other, it's not always easy. Gratitude doesn't come naturally. Self-pity does. Belly aches do. Grumbles and mumbles – no one has to remind us to offer them. Few things sting more than ingratitude, and here's why. Because ingratitude communicates. It says "I don't recognize what you've done. I don't recognize your effort. I don't recognize your sacrifice."

We are often ungrateful in so many different ways: We Have UNGRATEFUL MINDSETS

- I Want It Now!
- I Deserve More!
- I Should Have Had Better!

"A proud man is seldom a grateful man, for he never thinks that he gets as much as he deserves." Henry Ward Beecher

- Unexpressed Gratitude Communicates Ingratitude.

Feelings don't count when it comes to gratitude because our feelings don't connect. The gratitude we feel but don't express is felt by the other person as the opposite of what we're feeling. We feel grateful, they feel unappreciated, taken for granted, and this is important. Telling other people how grateful we are for that person doesn't count either, even if that person overhears us.

Have you ever felt taken for granted? It's terrible. It's dehumanizing, and it's one of the worst things you can experience on planet earth. Luke tells a story of 10 lepers Jesus healed. All 10 were healed physically, but only one was healed of ingratitude. Which one? The one who came back and said, "Thank You!"

The border between Samaria and Galilee is a very remote area, sparsely populated. It's kind of in the middle of nowhere. People with leprosy lived there and basically hovered between life and death. They weren't dead, but they couldn't really live, and worse than that, they stood at a distance and they watched everybody else live their lives. In ancient times, leprosy was considered highly contagious. People afflicted with leprosy don't experience pain the way the rest of us do. They often either went unnoticed or unattended to. Their bodies would visibly

deteriorate over time, and the law required somebody who had leprosy to live on the outskirts of town. Any time they came toward town or came towards civilization, they had to warn people that they were approaching. There was no cure for this disease. They were all outcast from the temple. They were outcast from their families. They had no communication with the public.

They have no hope for tomorrow. They have nothing to look forward to. They have distorted faces. They have body parts that have fallen off. One of the first things to go would be the nose, and the nose is just lying there, flat, and the lips would begin to droop, and the teeth and gums would be exposed. The lips hang down on distorted faces.

Lepers often created their own communities. They grew their own crops and survived the best that they could. It would come as no surprise to Luke's first century readers that a community of lepers were struggling to make ends meet living in this remote borderland between the predominantly Jewish territory of Galilee and the area inhabited mostly by Samaritans.

“Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, ‘Jesus, Master, have pity on us!’ When he saw them, he said, ‘Go, show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, ‘Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?’ Then he said to him, ‘Rise and go; your faith has made you well.’” Luke 17:11-19

1. **Decide To Be The One!**

“One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice.” Luke 17:15

Will you be the one? Will you be the one that daily pauses to give glory and honor to the one that gave you life. Will you be the one to stop in all the busyness, and lift up a true, heartfelt worship to the Creator and Sustainer of the universe?

Will you be the one to give praise and honor and worship and glory to the one, who when you were a sinner, sent His Son, Jesus, to do something for you, that you couldn't do for yourself and you certainly deserve the opposite.

Think about the people that impact you. Will you be the one that stops long enough to write a thank you note to express your gratitude to someone who impacted you?

Will you be the one today to say to those who are ministering to your children faithfully every week, "Thank you for investing in my kids! Thank you for serving me and my family!" Will you be the one to stop and say thank you to a coach, or thank you to a teacher, or thank you to someone who leads your LifeGroup, or thank you to your Mom or thank you to your Dad, or thank you to the pastor that leads you at your church? Will you be the one to stop and to show honor and gratitude?

Jesus asked a question. He said, *"Were not all 10 cleansed? Where are the other nine?"* In the Greek text, it's interesting because the interrogative *"where"* is actually at the end of the sentence for emphasis. It reads, *"The nine, where? The nine, where are they?"* Jesus isn't really expecting an answer, he's just making a stinging observation. Something is missing, someone is missing, some ones are missing. The other nine have missed the moment. The other nine have missed their opportunity. Something was missing, incomplete, unfinished, open-ended.

Even Jesus was astonished. You'd think that neither fire nor hail could have kept them from falling at Jesus's feet. Where were the other nine? It's easy to speculate. Some were too busy to be thankful. They planned to express thanks. But first they needed to find family members, doctors, dogs, parakeets, and neighbors. Just too busy. Some were too cautious to be thankful. They guarded against joy, kept their hopes down. Waited to see what Jesus wanted in return. What's too good to be true usually is. They were cautious. Others were too self-centered to be thankful. The sick life was simpler. Now they had to get a job, play a role in society. Others were too arrogant. They never were *that* sick. Given enough time, they would have recovered. Besides, to be grateful is to admit to being needy. Who wants to show weakness when you have an image to protect?

At the end of this account, we discover that this particular community of lepers was comprised of both Jews and Samaritans, two groups who normally would have nothing to do with each other for both political and religious reasons. Pain, suffering, and alienation have a way of minimizing differences and maximizing what people have in common. When people need each other, politics and religion are just not front burner issues.

"They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice," from a distance, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us."
Luke 17:12-13

They recognized that it was Jesus. They knew Him by His reputation, and they call out, "Master," which was really unusual, because this was a term reserved for those who were continuous followers of Jesus, His disciples, and clearly they were not. But desperate times call for desperate measures, and if He could do what people said He could do, He was their only hope.

When Jesus saw them, he shouted out, "Go, ow yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed." Luke 17:14

That's what they'd heard for years—"Go" as in "Go away." But here's what Jesus said. Jesus said, "Go and show yourselves to the priests," which they must've thought, "Go and show them what? There's nothing to show, and besides, the priests aren't all that anxious to see us. In fact, nobody is."

Jesus had a triple intent here. According to the law, anyone with any kind of skin disease, after being quarantined, had to go to a local priest to be given the all clear before they could go back into society. The implication was, by the time you get there, and when you the priest sees you, you're going to get the all clear. But there was even more to it than that.

Imagine this. When 10 healed lepers show up, the priest would certainly ask how all 10 of them were healed, and that would be an unprecedented event, and it would clearly be a miracle. It would be impossible to argue that something extraordinary hadn't happened.

Their willingness to go before anything had changed would certainly be an expression of extraordinary faith in Jesus, and if nothing changed on the way, it would make fools of the lepers. So, there was a lot at stake, and there was a lot behind this request to go.

If you're in their situation, what would you do?

2. Determine To Turn Blessings Into Praise

"One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan." Luke 17:16

We sing a song. "Every Blessing You Pour Out I'll Turn Back To Praise."

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name.”
Psalm 100:4

- Every Blessing I Don't Turn Back To Praise Turns Into Pride.
- He Went Back To Thank The One Who Had Enabled Him To Move Forward.
- He Worshiped The One Who Changed His Life.

We are introduced to leper worship in the story. Leper worship is not praising God for what He has done. Leper worship is when you praise God for who He is. So many of us just praise God when He meets our needs, “Thank you for the house, thank you for the car, thank you for...” Leper worship is the worship that God will never resist, and it's when you're not coming saying, "Thank you for what you've done," but, "Thank You for who You are. You are my Savior! You are my healer! You are my strong tower! You are my strength! You are my comforter, and I worship You for who You are!”

Sometimes our life looks like that leper scene. There's nothing good going on. Pain is real. Hurt is real. Life is real, and when it hits, it turns your life ugly, and in those moments, you don't worship God because of what He's done or doing, you worship Him for who He is. And every now and then, you need to give God leper worship, not because He checked the boxes off of your prayer list, but you give Him leper worship because He is your redeemer, He is Lord. Every now and then, the whole church needs to break out in leper worship and say, “Lord, if I never get another prayer answered, I want you to know you're worthy, Lamb of God! You're worthy because of what you did on that cross! You're worthy because you rose from the dead! You're worthy because you're my coming King, and I give you leper worship!” And when you give Him leper worship, He cannot resist your worship. He will not leave you like you are. And when he began to worship, the other nine went home.

He went back to thank the One who enabled him to move forward with his life, and Luke, looking back over the story of Jesus' life, must've smiled when he penned these next four words in Greek, five words in English. *"And he was a Samaritan."* The implication being the other nine probably weren't. This man had experienced alienation and discrimination on multiple levels. He was extra grateful, and I think the reason for this added seemingly unimportant detail comes to light when you read all the entirety of Luke's gospel. Because over and over in his gospel, Luke highlights Jesus' encounters with outsiders, people that his first century audience would never expect Jesus to have anything to do with, and over and over, it was the outsiders who expressed the most gratitude.

If you feel the world owes you something, brace yourself for a life of pain. You'll never get reimbursed. The sky will never be blue enough. The steak won't be cooked enough. You'll snarl your way to an early grave.

The lepers' entire destiny had been changed. Apart from Jesus, apart from his intervention, they were going to spend the rest of their lives living out in the middle of nowhere. They've been restored to their families and their children. They could work again, they could worship again, and where are they?

o reflect on your blessings is to rehearse God's accomplishments. To rehearse God's accomplishments is to discover His heart. To discover His heart is to discover, not just good gifts, but the Good Giver. Gratitude always leaves us looking at God and away from dread. It does to anxiety what the morning sun does to valley mist. It burns it up.

Join the ranks of the 10 percent who give God praise. *“Give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Ephesians 5:20

3. Discover The Healing Power In Gratitude.

"Rise and Go, Your faith has made you well." Luke 17:19

When Jesus turns back to the one who returned and says once again, "*Rise and go*," and of course this is the second time. The word "well" is the idea of "whole." The Greek word is "sozo," which means "complete, unbroken, undivided."

Have you noticed the healing power of worship? Have you noticed the healing power of gratitude? When you turn that pain, hurt, and emptiness into worship, and you worship Him not because of what He is doing, because we don't understand what He's doing, but you worship Him because of who He is. God is in control, and He reminds us, "I'm a good God! Even when life isn't good, I'm still good, and I'm going to bring you through with victory!"

We live in a world where a lot of people have the wrong answers. Anger is not the answer. Worship is the answer! Feeling sorry for yourself and sinking into depression isn't the answer. Worship is the answer.

Your worship is powerful. It heals you. It restores you. Our God is a restorer of the broken hearts! He said in the Book of Joel, "*I will restore the years the enemy's stolen.*" Joel 2:25

Let's be the one rather than the nine. Let's make up our mind to be like the one who went back, to thank the one who enabled us to move forward. Make it a habit of our lives to go back to the people who've allowed us to move forward.

Who helped you move forward?

Have you thanked them recently?

Could it be that we are, in fact, more like the nine than the one? That we took what was given, got distracted by the new opportunity, the new freedom, the new recognition, and then you just went on our merry way without circling back to say thank you?