

Luke 17:11-19 Give Thanks to the Lord! Pentecost 21 October 9, 2016

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Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from your Lord and Savior, the Healer of body and soul. God's Word to give us reasons to be thankful to Him are written in Luke 17:11-19

These are Your words heavenly Father. Increase our trust in You through Your Word. Your Word is truth!

Dear Christian friends,

Today our sermon will have a stewardship emphasis. Often when we hear the word stewardship, we think that God wants us to give offerings or volunteer. He does, but that is not where stewardship starts. Christian stewards begin with a right attitude of the heart. God wants us to see His rich blessings to us; and He tests us as believers so we can to express our faith and give thanks to Him. Because of our sinful nature it's not easy for us to daily thank God. We need His Word to remind us how blessed we are so we can:

Give thanks to the Lord!

First, Jesus deserves our thanks. He has shown mercy. *"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!'"* (v.12-13) Leprosy was a horrible disease. It left open sores on the skin and created deformities on the hands, feet, and face. The smell must have been a stench. Even the voices of lepers were affected. It took all ten of the lepers to call to Jesus and get His attention. Their physical disease wasn't their only problem. They were shunned by their family or friends. They couldn't worship at the temple. If anyone came close to them, they called "Unclean" so the other person could run away.

Seeing Jesus, they made one request: *"Show mercy to us!"* These men must have heard of Jesus' healing power. They called to Him to take pity on their miserable lives. Then Jesus sent them on their way and they were healed. Why didn't the 10 men return? Jesus was important to the lepers while they were sick, but after they were well, 9 didn't think they needed Jesus for anything more. The nine healed men returned to the priests, to their families and friends, and probably thought it enough to thank God through an offering at the temple. Once healed, they felt no need to continue their relationship with Jesus.

On the day they were healed Jesus gave them two tests of faith. The first was how to respond to His command. *"He said, 'Go. Show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went, they were cleansed."* (v. 14) On another occasion, Jesus healed a leper and then sent him to the priest to be declared clean. If these 10 men were still covered in leprosy when they arrived at the priests, they would have been scorned or even beaten. But, by trusting in Christ's command, they went on their way and suddenly saw they had been made whole: hands, feet, face, skin – all healthy again! When the one man returned, Luke states that he was so completely healed that he could call out in a loud voice to praise God, thanking Jesus! He passed the first test of believing for healing and he passed the second test of faith when he returned to give thanks!

Does Jesus deserve our thanks? He hasn't cured us from leprosy, but we have many sins which separate us from God much more than leprosy isolated people. Just as Jesus could have turned away from those lepers, so He could have left us to die in our sins. But, instead He came to us, lived a holy life, and suffered more than even a person with leprosy could imagine. By His death He paid for all sins. Now through His Word and in baptism, Jesus freely offers us His forgiveness! He tells us to go to God without fear or shame, for Jesus has made us clean in God's sight! We owe Jesus everything - for eternal life with God, for daily healing and protection in life, and for keeping our faith strong. Thank God for Jesus!

Second, Jesus looks for our thanks! We read in verses 15-16, *“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.”* The man knew that he didn’t deserve to be healed. He had only asked Jesus to show him “pity.” He felt unworthy of any kindness from Jesus. So when he was healed, he felt that he had to return! With his life, work and family restored to him, he made known to all that Jesus was the one who healed him. By kneeling, he was saying that his new life now belonged to Jesus. The words he spoke before all the people were the least that he could do to say thanks; and he probably did more!

Jesus responded, *“Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”* (v.17-18) As happy as Jesus was to see the one man return, He was just as sad that the other nine did not return to say thanks. His disappointment wasn’t because He lost out of some praise. Jesus has all honors in heaven. He doesn’t need our praise. It was rather that the nine had ceased their connection with Jesus. He wanted them to benefit from hearing more of His promises and receive blessings including eternal life.

Jesus has high expectations that we’ll offer Him thanks as we stay connected to Him. He doesn’t want us to take His kindness, His love, and His sacrifice for us for granted. We’re believers, so it’s not that we don’t ever say thanks. But, too often, maybe 9 out of 10 times He blesses us and we neglect to thank Him! Give honor where honor is due. If it’s a beautiful day, do we thank the weatherman or God? Jesus deserves our praise for His blessings to us. But, sometimes our problems seem greater than our blessings. We complain that we have problems in our family, forgetting that God has graciously given us a family. We complain that life is hard at work or school, forgetting that many people have no job or education. We have been blessed in so many ways that we actually get so used to them we forget God’s unmerited grace to us. Our relationship gets distant and we don’t praise Jesus the way He wants us to.

Yet, Jesus praised the thankful Samaritan: *“Your faith has made you well.”* (v.19) We too live by faith in Jesus. By God’s grace we are believers who have a place reserved for us in heaven through Christ. He has promised as we hear His Word and daily repent of our sins that He will keep us faithful until the end. The Bible states, *“God has said, ‘Never will I leave you...’”* (Hebrews 13:4-5) He is telling us: even if we don’t get everything we want or that we think that we need, we have Him! Trust in Him and be thankful!

Jesus love for us was gracious. He didn’t first say to the lepers, I’ll heal you if you come back and thank Me. No! Luther wrote that Jesus’ love always risks betrayal or denial. So, for us, Jesus didn’t say, If all of you are thankful, then I’ll die for you! He gave Himself completely for us without any demand on us. And Christ wants us to receive so much more as God’s chosen people. We do well to remember Psalm 103: *“Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits... who forgives all your sins and heals your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things....”* (Psalm 103:2-5)

As we read the stewardship handouts today and over the next few weeks, remember that stewardship begins with what we receive from God. Jesus has been gracious to us when we have earned nothing but punishment. He not only took our punishment, He daily blesses us with so many good things we can’t begin to count them all! How shall we respond? Will we walk away in ungratefulness like the 9 or do we return to Him daily with thanks. Do we praise the One who gave us all good things? Let us carry His closing words home with us today with thankful hearts: *“Rise and go, your faith [in Me] has healed you.”* Amen.