**October 9, 2022 Luke 17:11-19**

***Give Thanks***

**Scripture: *Luke 17:11-19 NRSV***

*(11)On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. (12)As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, (13)they called out, 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 made clean. (15)Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. (16)He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. (17)Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? (18)Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" (19)Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."*

**Notes:**

1. Israelites treated Samaritans as ***outcasts***.
   1. Samaritans were ***outcasts*** when it came to the Israelites.
   2. lepers were ***outcasts*** from society as well.
2. Jesus tells the ten lepers to do what was required by the ***law***.
   1. Their death sentence was lifted; they could go ***home***.
   2. One Samaritan leper returned to show his ***gratitude***.
   3. He is an ***outcast*** because of his condition and because of who he is.
3. Each of us has suffered the ***anguish*** of being an outcast.
   1. Give ***thanks*** to God for the gifts he has given to us.
   2. Live a Christian life in ***gratitude***.
   3. Live your life in grateful ***obedience***, a thanks filled life.
4. God appreciates being ***thanked***.
   1. When we give thanks, we become ***stronger*** and ***happier***.
   2. Make a special effort to be ***thankful*** people.
5. Begin now to ***prepare*** our hearts for thanksgiving.
   1. What are you ***thankful*** for?
   2. What should you be thankful for that you take for ***granted***?
6. Thank God, he takes joy in hearing our ***grateful*** voices.
   1. ***Worship*** God and give Him thanks.
   2. Give thanks for God’s gifts, no matter how ***great*** or ***small***.

**Script:**

I can now imagine what it must have been like to be a leper. I have missed the Sunday of September 18 because of fear of the dreaded COVID virus. Earlier in the week Jan had come down with the symptoms and went to be tested. Because I am in such close proximity to her, I was told to quarantine, in other words, I was just like the lepers who were instructed to stay away from people who were not infected with the dreaded disease. I emailed the church board and notified them as to what was going on. I came to the church and recorded the sermon, placed it on a disk for Ronnie to play when the time was right and went home to try to stay away from all who were not infected. Unfortunately, I tested positive on Sunday, so for the next week I went about my business to the best of my ability without coming into close proximity to others. I tested negative finally on Tuesday.

I am sure there are many of you who have felt much the same way, whether you were keeping your distance so you did not catch the virus, or you were keeping your distance in order to not infect somebody else. You may have felt like a leper.

Our passage today takes us into the Gospel of Luke and tells the story of Jesus’ encounter with not just one leper, but ten. We find this passage in Luke 17:11-19. Stand with me and jing me in the reading of this passage this morning.

***Luke 17:11-19 NRSV (11)On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. (12)As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, (13)they called out, 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 made clean. (15)Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. (16)He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. (17)Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? (18)Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" (19)Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."***

The Israelites treated Samaritans as outcasts. Samaritans worshiped God in Shechem rather than Jerusalem and had their own version of the scriptures. To the Israelites, Samaritans were worse than heathens, because the Samaritans were descendants of Abraham, they had the same precious heritage as the Israelites, but they had defiled it. So Samaritans were outcasts when it came to the Israelites.

We also know that the lepers were outcasts from society as well. They had to wear torn clothes; they had to let their hair hang loose; everywhere they went they had to announce their presence by shouting “unclean, unclean!” to warn people of their infectious condition ad presence. They were not allowed to enter into towns or mix with other people who were not infected. If they were to come into proximity that was considered too close, people were allowed to throw stones at them. SO they formed their own villages and communities specifically for lepers; misery loves company, right?

So on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus meets a group of ten lepers. The lepers recognized Jesus and began calling out to him to have mercy on them and heal them. Their situation was dire, they felt their situation was hopeless, because leprosy was incurable. But they had heard of Jesus and the wondrous works he was performing throughout the region of Samaria and Galilee. It doesn’t hurt to ask, right? If all goes well, they will be healed and able to return to their homes and family.

In that day, priests diagnosed leprosy; that was one of their jobs. When you were suspected of having leprosy, the bible says you were required to go to the priest. If the priest said that you had leprosy you had to leave town. If you thought that you were healed of leprosy, you would again go to the priest; if he said that you were healed you were cleared to return home. The priest’s word was the law.

So, Jesus tells the ten lepers to do what was required by the law. “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And scripture says, “As they went, they were cleansed!” (17:14). If they would have stood there waiting to be cured I don’t know if they would have been cured or not. But when they did what Jesus said and began traveling to the closest priest they were healed. Can you imagine, turning to do what you were told and watching as your skin became clear!

What rejoicing! They were well; they were no longer outcasts. Their death sentence was lifted; they could go home. But first, they must get a priest to pronounce them healed. Where was the nearest priest? And once that was completed, they had to get home as quickly as possible. If Friday evening were approaching, they would have to get home before the Sabbath. Once the Sabbath started, they couldn’t travel for a whole day, prolonging their separation.

The story could have stopped right there, but something happened, something more important than finding a priest. One of the lepers, a Samaritan, stops in the middle of the road he was traveling on, turns around and returns to Jesus. Jesus is the one who had healed him; he needed to return to Jesus and thank him. And so he did, he lies down prostrate, at the feet of Jesus and thanks him.

Jesus’s response seems puzzling; He sounds as if he is rebuking the one man who returned to say thank you; the one who did the right thing. *“Weren’t ten lepers cleansed? I only see one in front of me. Where are the other nine.”* Luke says these comments are made to the leper who was just healed and returned to say thank you, but also mentions that he said it loud enough for those around to hear also. Jessus is really talking to the crowd, *"Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? (18)Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"*

Jesus is making two points here. First, only one of the ten who were healed returned to show their gratitude. Only one bothered to say thank you. The second point is the about where this man is from and his status in relation to the Israelite community. He is an outcast because of his condition and he was an outcast because of who he is. Jesus was not rebuking this poor Samaritan; Jesus just loved to make a hero of the underdog, listen to his last words to this Samaritan, *"Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."*

**That is nice Pastor, but what does this have to do with me?** Obviously if we were lepers and the flesh was rotting off of our bones and Jesus would heal us we should give thanks. But that doesn’t happen every day, and I doubt anybody in this area has ever suffered from this disease. But this story is not just about a leper, yet I doubt any of us here this morning are Samaritans, so it still doesn’t pertain to us; or does it?

Well it does pertain to us, it is our story as well. Each and every one of us here this morning has suffered the anguish at least once in their life of being an outcast. Many of us still struggle with this in the dark regions of our mind. But even more than this is our need to be thankful for what the Lord has done and will do in our lives. This scripture is about thankfulness, and we need to remember to give thanks to God for the gifts he has given to us, no matter how great or how small. That is not an easy lesson to remember let alone learn. But this is one of the most important lessons we need to remember and learn.

Vance Havner, an evangelist and revivalist states, “*Our biggest problem in the church today, is this vast majority of Sunday morning Christians who claim to have known the Master’s cure, and who return not … to thank Him by presence, prayer, testimony and support of His church. … The whole Christian life is one big ‘Thank You,’ the living expression of our gratitude to God for His goodness.  
But we take Him for granted and what we take for granted we never take seriously.*” What I understand him to say is that we live our Christian life in gratitude for what the Lord has done for us. When we neglect to come to church; when we refuse to give of our time and money to support the church; when we fail to offer up prayers of thanks, prayers of remorse, prayers of repentance, prayers of intercession; what we display is an attitude of ungratefulness. When we have these attitudes we are just like the nine lepers who left. But when we live our life in grateful obedience, serving God, serving the church, giving of our time and money, spending time in prayer; we are living a thanks-filled life like the Samaritan Leper who returned to Jesus to worship and thank him.

Another man named Richard Douglass says it this way, “*The modern American seldom pauses to give thanks for the simple blessings of life. One reason is that we are used to having so much. We simply assume that we will have all the good things in life. Another reason is that it hurts our pride to be grateful. We do not want to admit that God is the Provider of all good things…. Being thankful requires humility.*” Douglass is condemning the modern American who is too proud to realize who the provider of their sustenance is. Proverbs 16:17-20 says, “*(17)The highway of the upright avoids evil; those who guard their way preserve their lives. (18)Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. (19)It is better to be of a lowly spirit among the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud. (20)Those who are attentive to a matter will prosper, and happy are those who trust in the LORD. NRSV*”

You know how much it means to you when someone tells you thanks. Doesn’t it make you feel great! It means just as much to God when we tell him thanks. He appreciates being thanked, but He also knows that, when we give thanks, we become stronger and happier. Have you ever noticed that those who have little, seem to appreciate what they have, more than those who have much. Perhaps the lesson for us is that, the richer we are, the more difficult it is to remember to be thankful. If that is the case, we need to make a special effort to be thankful people.

With thanksgiving coming upon us in the next 6 to 8 weeks we should begin now to prepare our hearts. Thanksgiving is a good time for us to get caught up on all the thanking we neglected to do. I noticed with my oldest grandchild that they are working to teach him to say thank you when he receives something. They are teaching him to ask for things politely, saying please and then thank you when it is received. How often do we catch ourselves making a specific effort to give thanks for the things we receive, no matter how small.

What if the rule was that we could not ask for anything until we had given thanks for the things we have received. Imagine trying to remember all the blessings that you have received in your lifetime. There is very little chance of remembering all of it. Imagine trying to remember all the blessings of this past week. How many of them can you remember? It is difficult.

So, I challenge you to remember all of the blessings you have received just this morning; what should you be thankful for. I am thankful for the warm bed I woke up in. I am thankful for the roof over my head, the food that I was blessed to eat this morning, the coffee flavored water that I was able to drink. I am thankful for the air that I breathe. I am thankful for my home, not just the house but the people who dwell there with me. I am eternally grateful for my wife, my children including both of my wonderful daughter in laws, and my grandsons. I am thankful for this church; I am thankful for my relationship with Jesus Christ and salvation I was given even when I was not worthy. And that is just the beginning. What are you thankful for, and what should you be thankful for that you take for granted? If you were to make a list of all the things you were thankful for, you would also have to list all of the things that did not happen to you as well. How long do you think that would take?

Thank God, he does not require us to make a list, but I am certain he takes joy in hearing our grateful voices. But notice the disappointment in our Lord’s words today in the nine who did not return to give thanks. Notice the joy in his words for the one who did return. As individuals and as a body of Christ, let us resolve to follow the example of this one Samaritan leper who not only received healing but was cognizant enough to turn around and kneel at the feet of Jesus to worship him and give Him thanks. Let us put a special effort into giving thanks for all of God’s gifts, no matter how great or how small. Give thanks to our Savior who has shown us SUCH LOVE!!!