

THANKSGIVING SERMON 2022

TEXT: LUKE 17:11-19

THEME: THANKFULNESS

11 On the way to Jerusalem he was passing 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."

In the name of Jesus:

One day on his way to work a man came up to a young teenage boy sitting on the steps of a downtown building holding a sign. As the man grew closer, he realized that this boy was blind. As he got closer and read the sign that the boy was holding, he was able to read it, and the sign said: "Please help me, I am blind." But sadly, no one was stopping to help the boy. Absolutely no one.

The man thought for a moment and then said hi to the boy, took a few coins from his pocket, and dropped the change in the hat that was placed near the lad. He asked if he could see the sign for a moment, then, taking the sign, he turned the sign around and wrote something on the back of the sign. He

then put the sign back into the boy's hands so that everyone who walked by could read what he had now written.

Soon the donations began pouring in. Everyone who walked by saw the words that the man had written and were giving not just spare change but dollar bills! Some even stopped to talk to the boy, and others would offer a word of encouragement such as God Bless you and Thank you.

Later that afternoon as the man was returning home from work he passed by the blind boy to see how he was doing. The boy, recognizing the man's footsteps and voice, said hi to him and asked the man if he was the one who had changed his sign, and if he had, what did he write on the back of his sign.

The man replied, I only wrote the truth, but I said it in a different way. I wrote that today is a beautiful day but I can not see it. The man went on to explain that while both signs conveyed the same truth, the second sign reminded people of the precious gift of sight and that we should not take it for granted.

On this Thanksgiving weekend, Americans pause to show their gratitude and thanks. But to whom are they thankful?

In the Gospel lesson for today, we see ten men who were afflicted with leprosy. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, passing along between the regions

of Samaria and Galilee. Jesus entered a village where He was met by ten lepers who stood at a distance. Why were they standing at a distance? Because they were lepers! They had a highly contagious disease, they were ostracized by everyone, having no home to call their own, no job, no friends, even no family as they stayed in colonies to separate them from the general population. To have leprosy was to have a death sentence.

But here was Jesus, passing through the village. They had heard about Him and His miracles. Maybe, just maybe, Jesus would be able to do something, anything for them. So seeing Jesus, they called out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us!" And that is what they needed, mercy, underserved love, they needed pity, they needed! Jesus tells them to go and show themselves to the priests. Why? Because the priests were the ones, the only ones who could declare a leper cleansed, and if cleansed, then the healed ones could offer a sacrifice to God.

So, while on the way, the lepers were cleansed. Jesus spoke, and it happened! Taking Jesus at His Word they were healed. But, as Luke the physician notes, one, only one returned to Jesus, praising God with a loud voice, falling at Jesus' feet, giving Jesus thanks. Luke goes on to add that this one was a Samaritan. Not a Jew, but one who was not a part of God's chosen people. This one gave thanks.

That is why Jesus said, “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.” And he went on his way, for he was now made whole.

But the other nine, where were they? Weren't they thankful? I would think that they would be thankful, and to give them the benefit of the doubt, they probably were thankful. Who wouldn't be? If you have ever been sick, and then recovered, aren't you thankful? Sure you are! You have your life back! You want to get on with living! And that is understandable.

And that might, just might be a reason why the nine lepers didn't return to thank Jesus. They wanted to get on with living. They missed out on a great deal, so now it was time to make up for lost time. There would be family gatherings to attend, friends to catch up with, things to do and people to see. And all that is well and good. But each has its own proper place in the pecking order.

You see, God will not share His honor and glory with another. He alone should receive the glory, honor and praise. But when the Lord, who has done the healing, doesn't even get the time of day after He has done wonders, well then, it makes one wonder. It makes me wonder.

After all, many pastors see it and experience it. “Hurry, Pastor, my loved one needs a visit, please go and see and pray for my loved one.” And the pastor does just that. “Pastor, will you come visit me in the hospital?” And the pastor does, and does so faithfully. And all the while, it is not the pastor who really does anything to change the situation, it is the Lord doing the healing, it is the Lord doing His work, through His chosen instruments, the pastor, the doctors, and therapists. The one who has the need makes a request of the Lord, and the Lord delivers! And then, time and again, and this is something I see in my ministry and if you are honest you see it as well, those who receive the Lord’s blessings and answers to prayer are nowhere to be found when it comes to coming to God’s House and giving thanks to the Lord for the Lord is good and merciful.

This isn’t a complaint that I have, it is an observation from over 40 years of ministry, that people back then are so similar to the people who live today. And many times when a person receives an answer to prayer, asking that the Lord have mercy, and the Lord has mercy, they act more like the nine lepers who get on with living. It isn’t that they aren’t thankful, they just don’t know to whom they are to thank.

That is what this one leper who returns to thank Jesus teaches us and models for us today. Each and everyone of us are blessed beyond measure,

with physical blessings too numerous to mention, and spiritual blessings as well. We are forgiven, made children of God in Baptism, and blessed by the Lord now and throughout our lives.

And so this one leper who returns teaches us where true thankfulness is to be directed: to Jesus. This one thankful leper knows who the True Giver is, He is the One who forgives and gives eternal life. He is Jesus, who lived, died, and rose again giving life and salvation to all who believe in Him.

It is one thing to be thankful in a general sense, it is quite another to be thankful and to give thanks to the One who gives the blessings and is the True Gift Giver: Jesus. And that is what the one leper who returned to Jesus teaches each of us, that our thanks this Thanksgiving and our thanks always in life, is to be directed to the One who helps us in our time of need. Jesus! For in Jesus we live, move, and have our being. And it is to Jesus that we give thanks and praise, for He is our ever present Help in life and in death.

Amen

