

Written Copy For: Luke 17:15-19 “Return and Give Praise”

Thanksgiving Eve

Wednesday, November 26th 2019

Text: Luke 17:15-19

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."

Exegetical Statement

As Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem and is passing along the border between Samaria and Galilee, He is heading into a village that has an enclave of lepers dwelling outside the city limits. They raise voices and cry out from a distance, as they are supposed to do by law-crying out "Unclean" so that regular people are warned not to come near. But when the see Jesus they cry out pleading with Him to show them mercy and compassion. Jesus answers by telling them to leave that place and present themselves to the priests-an act that would be required to pronounce them healed from leprosy. As they obey His command by faith all 10 find themselves healed as they make their way to the priest. Nine continue on, but one, a Samaritan turns back and is now calling out in a loud voice praise and thanksgiving to God. When he reaches Jesus, he falls prostrate before Him and gives thanks and praise to Him for the grace Jesus has shown Him. Jesus asked a question about where the other nine are to emphasize that only this non-Jew was moved to return to give thanks and praise before He who with the power of God did what only God could do. Jesus then turns toward the man and dismisses him to return to his former life, declaring that the man's faith in Jesus as the healer with the power of God is what has not only freed him from leprosy but has saved him from eternal death.

Focus Statement:

Jesus has declared us clean from the sin that would condemn us to everlasting hell even without our asking Him to. He continues to graciously and lovingly respond to our requests for mercy and compassion, not demanding we do anything to deserve these things, and all the while giving and strengthening the faith that is the conduit by which God works His miracles

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Although we have received many great and wonderful blessings both by prayerful petition and even by God's hand without our asking, upon receiving them we are like the nine who, so excited to return to normal life do not return and give heartfelt praise and thanksgiving appropriate for the blessings we received.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Stop and consider all the gracious and merciful acts of God in our life. As a response to the love He shows us in these acts we are to thank Him, praise Him, and worship Him with appropriate feeling and thanksgiving.

Subject Sentence: Respond to God's Mercy thru worship and praise

Well, it's the evening before Thanksgiving, and I can guess what you're thinking about. Your thinking about Pie! But beyond that you're thinking about the Thanksgiving Meal that your going to enjoy with family and friends tomorrow. At least I hope you are all gathering together with a significant somebody or two. I've had the displeasure of spending Thanksgiving alone, and I don't wish that on anyone. If you plan on being by yourself all day tomorrow then say something to me or one of the Elders after service.

And as you gather together at the table tomorrow and prepare to dig, in I hope you will be moved to say a prayer of Thanksgiving to the One who has made it all possible. Not to the women (or in some cases men) who have been slaving away in the kitchen; although we can include thanks for them prayerfully. But we lift up a prayer of blessing to our Heavenly Father who has created all things and is the source of all that is good. Perhaps you will utilize the ever-popular Common Table Prayer: "Come Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blessed. And may there be a generous share on every table everywhere." Maybe some of you will say the Lord's Prayer. Others may recite prayer they've written before hand, or spontaneously recite one from their own head. All these are appropriate. Just remember, especially if your ad lib'ing that there are hungry folks awaiting. And because there has been requests in the past for me to teach you this prayer, it would be perfectly acceptable to use my dad's table prayer. So: repeat after me: "**We thank you Lord, for happy hearts, for rain and sunny weather. We thank you Lord, for this our food, and that we are here together.**" How ever you want to go about it you should certainly thank and recognize the God who made it all possible. So it is especially good, right, and salutary that we have gathered together here this evening to give worship and praise to our

Heavenly Father before the business of Thanksgiving, and then the Christmas shopping threatens to consume us.

In fact, it is good, right, and salutary to stop and thank the Lord every day in our homes or our cars or wherever we might be for all His gifts that He pours out upon us, made new every morning. We may not have a Thanksgiving size meal every day, but He does generously supply us with all the food we need, as well as all of the other bodily needs for life in this world. There are people across the world, and even right here in Genesee County who would love to have some of the gifts we enjoy every day. I say this not to lay a guilt trip on you. But to help you as well as me open our eyes to just how much we all have to be thankful for, no matter what negative circumstances we may be facing in our life right now.

Considering how blessed we are we have ample reason to gather here on a weekly basis and worship and praise our Lord with all our hearts and all our souls. We gather together here as the family of God and every worship service is alike a Thanksgiving Celebration. It's the appropriate response from His beloved children for all that He does for us. And as we do so He is not just standing idly by and nodding His head approvingly. As we lift our praises to Him, He is pouring out on us over and over again His gifts of love, faith, forgiveness of sins, salvation from eternal death, and life everlasting. All that Christ has won for us on the cross comes pouring out to us in wave after wave: in the Absolution, in the Readings, in the Hymns, in the Sermon, and in a most personal way-in the Lord's Supper. How great should our response in prayer song be?

That being said, consider for a moment: on the average, how joyous is your response to our Lord in worship? Considering all that we receive as free unearned gifts how joyous should

it be? I'm preaching this to myself as well as to you because quite honestly my worship can be lukewarm at times. Now I'm not saying that I want us to change our worship service into a Pentecostal hand raising, and spontaneous shouts of "Amen" and "Hallelujah" free for all. Worship can and should be emotionally engaging, but at the same time reverent and showing due respect for the One that we worship. But how invested are you and I in the hymns that we sing? How invested should we be, even in the ones we don't like, considering who we sing them to and what He means to us. How mentally involved should we be in the prayers? How active should our listening be to the Scripture Readings or the Sermon? Worship is to be a sacrifice on our part. Not that we bring sacrifices to the altar as in days of old. But as Paul says in **Romans 12:1** "**I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.**" Coming here as ;living sacrifices and present our very lives to our Lord. We give Him the sacrifice of our time. Those who sing in the choir or serve in some other manner make this a sacrifice of their talent. And we all are to give a sacrifice of our treasures. We do this all as an outpouring of our love and thanksgiving for all the free gifts we have received from our Lord Jesus Christ.

And what about those who are on the membership roles, but don't have the time or compulsion to come and give thanks and praise? Those who by the Gospel's witness (**1 Peter 2:9**) "**are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.**"? How important to them are the wonderful gifts that Christ died on the cross to purchase for them? Do they still have meaning and value? Or

have they let it slip away? They seem to have a lot in common with the “other nine” from our Gospel Lesson.

In that Lesson we have 10 lepers calling out to Jesus, begging Him to have mercy on them. They are gathered outside the entrance to a village. They must live there apart from the general population so as not to infect them, since leprosy is a highly contagious skin disease. They live near the city so that friends and loved ones might leave food and supplies for them. But all in all it's a lonely life. And since there was no cure for them at that time they are consigned to live that way until the disease or complications from it takes their life. These 10 cry out to Jesus. They know His name. Perhaps they've heard that He has healed the leprosy in other men before. They call out in hope and ask for mercy.

And of course He does have mercy upon them. He does so in a miraculous way that demonstrates the power He has to heal. Jesus doesn't have to approach them, doesn't have to say any magic words over them, doesn't even have to pray to the Father and ask that they might be healed. He doesn't do any of these things because He Himself is God, truly present among them. He simply ordered them to be on their way to the priest whose job it was to inspect and declare them clean. And they all react with faith. They start out for the priest without any sign of healing present. But as they go it happens according to the command and authority of Jesus. Suddenly they find themselves clean!

Imagine their joyful response when they realized what had happened! They are only one short visit to the temple away from resuming the lives they lived before this disease grabbed hold of them. They surely quickened their steps as they began to think of all the things lay ahead for them and the joy and wonder their families would experience. All seem

to have been consumed with these kinds of self-centered thoughts. Except for one. The Samaritan. He too had a life he was anxious to get to. He too would've needed to visit and be examined by the priest, probably at the temple the Samaritans worshiped at: on Mount Gerizim. But he was moved to do something different. More important than his own personal hopes, dreams, and desires was to return and give thanks for this miracle. The other nine may have walked through the streets on their way to the temple glorifying God. But it is this Samaritan that returns to the place where the very presence of God has been made manifest through this healing. He comes to Jesus and falls down prostrate before Him. He is praising the God of Israel and giving thanks to Him but is directing all this praise toward the man standing before Him. Could he possibly know that this man is God in human form? We don't know. But it is obvious that He believes there is an intimate connection between this man and the invisible God. So much so that it is appropriate to direct thanks and praise and worship towards Him.

Appropriate for us too. While we have not needed healing from leprosy, which by God's grace through medicine is now a curable disease, we have needed to be healed from a disease that is much more fatal. The disease of sin. Sin that had infected our thoughts, words, and actions. Sin which had corrupted our heart. Something we could never find the cure for on our own. Before we could even cry out to God for mercy Christ was there with His healing hand in the Gospel. There present with the Spirit through the waters of Baptism. There to apply to your life and my life personally all that He had done to save us, to heal us, by dying and the cross. He came without our asking and gave to us a new life. One in which we live with Him now and are kept close so that we will live with Him forever in eternal life. We each live as a precious child of the Heavenly Father and no one can snatch us out of

His hands. We truly have received a wonderful gift from our Lord and Savior that demands our thanksgiving and praise.

Of course we at times act like the nine who didn't return. We let life get in the way of our worship. If not in the way of our physical presence then in the way or our focus on what it most important, on His Word to us and our response to Him. And when we leave this place, we let the fear of ridicule stifle our expression of thanksgiving to our God before the world. But our gracious Savior forgives us. Through His word He calls out to us as we wander off into activities of self-pleasure. Calling us back to lives that are lived out as a living sacrifice to the LORD who is our Lamb of sacrifice. He calls us back and forgives us. Calls us to come here to receive grace upon grace upon grace over and over again. Calls us tonight to His table, to a meal far more extravagant than even a Thanksgiving Dinner. Even though it doesn't look like much: a flat tasteless wafer and a splash of wine. Yet in these common things, through the powerful words of Christ that make real what He declares, we receive His own body and blood for our physical and spiritual healing. So it's not by chance that one of the names for this meal is the Eucharist: which comes from the Greek word for giving thanks and praise. How thankful and how grateful should our hearts be this night as we intimately receive our Lord and Savior. And along with Him we become intimately connected to our brothers and sisters in Christ, both those present now, and those who have passed on; all united as the One True Body of Christ in this meal. It should cause you and I to ring out praise and thanksgiving to the One who makes this all possible. And then as we depart here this evening to go to our homes, Jesus says to each of you just as He did to the Samaritan: (**Luke 17:19**) **"Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."**

Your faith has healed you. Your faith has saved you. And over and above that, through the blessing of My Supper I go with you!

We have many reasons to give our Lord our thanks and praise. And there are many different things that can stand in the way of our praising and thanking Him as we ought to . But one of our greatest blessings is that we have a loving and forgiving God who calls us back to Him when we let the world and our own lives get in the way. When we let the dinner itself become more important than He who provides us with every good gift we enjoy. So when we become more like the nine that didn't see the need to return, may He impress upon us the kind of worship and praise the Samaritan gave. May He open our eyes and our hearts to how greatly He loves us and has blessed us. May He quicken our steps to gather together as His Church. And may His Spirit move in your heart and my heart to respond as His loving children ought to. May each of you truly find much to be thankful for.

Amen.