

Thanks-Living

Texts: Deuteronomy 8:7-18

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 (Series A. Thanksgiving, 22 Sunday after Pent.) Ps. 65

Luke 17:11-19

Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"

Prayer:

Holidays can bring out the worst in people. Stressful time for most people. Back in 1990, Scott Nelson, age 33, was charged with assaulting his wife. Apparently, he became enraged that his Thanksgiving turkey was not defrosted. So, he went out in the parking lot of their apartment complex and threw the frozen bird and a pie on the pavement. It gets worse.

In one episode of the TV cartoon show, "***The Simpsons***" young Bart, is asked to say grace. He prays, "***Dear God, we paid for all this stuff ourselves, so thanks for nothing.***" Who says TV doesn't reflect our culture? Ingratitude to God is nothing new.

Healing of Ten lepers. But only one comes back to say, "*Thank you.*" And he was a foreigner, to boot. Many experience God's blessings, but only a few show gratitude. We're not like that. I am confident no one here will hurl a frozen turkey through a windshield. And I am certain you won't thank God "**for nothing**" at table grace.

In Jesus day a leper had to live outside a walled town, although the leper could have lived in an open village. Wherever he was, he was required to have his outer garment torn as a sign of deep grief, as if he were lamenting his own death. He had to warn passers-by to keep away by calling out, "***Unclean! Unclean !!!***" as portrayed in the classic film *Ben Hur*.

A leper could not speak to anyone because in the East this involved an embrace. This uncleanness would exclude a leper from his/her town, family and friends and from public worship of God.

In today's Gospel we read how ten people came to Jesus. **Powerless** and **rejected**, and Jesus healed ten, and made **one better**. These lepers were of different nationalities and different religions. The Samaritans made up of Israel's Northern Kingdom by the King of Assyria about 700 B.C. They had come from Babylon and other places after the exile and soon mixed with the Jews.

They partly adopted the Jewish faith and worshiped elsewhere but Jerusalem. These and other issues created conflict and hostility between the Jews and Samaritans. So, the Jews of Jesus time would never think of a Samaritan as good. That is why Jesus parable was so shocking to his audience.

A devout Jew of Jesus time would not follow the route that Jesus took on the border of Samaria for fear that he / she might run into a Samaritan. But here we have a Saviour who came for everyone. Jew, Samaritan and Gentile or non-Jew, White or Black, first nations. That's you and me! He came not to mix with the religious, rich, the successful and famous.

But walked alongside those who were poor, outcasts, looked down upon by others. Even today the word leper can be used for someone who is despised and looked down upon. Yet Jesus not only spoke with them, but actually touched a leper as he healed him.

Jesus' life shows us how to be grateful. For common necessities of life such as feeding of 5,000. It is easy to take the common things in life for granted. Note that Jesus gave his thanks publicly, not in a corner. Thanks, should be audible. He was not ashamed to acknowledge the **Giver** of every good and perfect gift.

He thanked God for cup that represented his own blood. *"All the agonies He was to experience in those awful hours, as he hung on the cross, were represented by the cup he held in his blessed hand, and he thanked God "* Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

The lepers heard about Jesus' activities in their area. How he mixed and walked with all types of people, and of his power to heal. They clearly wanted Jesus to heal them and he did. But for one of them Jesus was able to have mercy.

Jesus only required them to have *faith* in him and to *obey* him. **They had to go to be healed.** They did, and were healed as they went to show themselves to a priest. To begin a process that would see them restored to their towns, their homes, families, jobs, and to taking a full part in the worship of God.

We sometimes take things for granted and forget to say, '*Thank you*'. The former lepers were so caught up with their healing that they forgot the healer. All except one. A Samaritan, a foreigner. The second time that a Samaritan put Jews of Jesus time to shame in the life and teaching of Jesus.

The Samaritan threw himself at the feet of Jesus with gratitude. Jesus was grieved by the ingratitude of the others. When he asked '*Were not all ten cleansed?*' he knew that they had all *been* cleansed. Clearly Jesus expected them to delay their celebration of healing for a few minutes and praise God for what God had done for them through Jesus.

Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Jesus calls the Samaritan, the foreigner, the outsider, and confers on him a status that the Jews, that were healed did not receive. He says "*Your faith has made you well.*" Not your faith has healed you. May I say "*Your gratitude has made you Well*"

He could have said this to the others. Their faith was superficial, and self-centred. But this man's *faith* was linked to a *gratitude* for what Jesus had done. Being well was referring to his body, soul, and spirit.

I would like us to place yourselves in the place of one of those lepers. We are **powerless**. Cut off from all that we hold dear. Home, friends, family, job and religion. We are despised and rejected by people.

We come to Jesus in desperation and Jesus heals us by sending us on a journey that will restore us to all the things we long for. Aren't we grateful? Or is that replaced with what seems to be more important?

The lepers were **powerless, rejected**. Everyone is powerless before God without Jesus and his Spirit. We are all separated from God by all the times we have failed to love him with our whole being, and failed to love others as ourselves.

This is what Paul was writing about to the Roman Christians in 3:9-18. No-one is righteous whether Jew or Gentile. The Jews of Jesus time, thought that because they had been chosen by God and had the law, which they tried to obey, put them right with God. Paul writes that the law only serves to expose our sinfulness and cannot put us right with God.

Paul continues that Christians are **'justified'**, by grace through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3 24). The term describes what happens when someone believes in Christ as his/her Saviour. God declares the person to be not guilty; from the positive viewpoint, he declares him to be righteous. He cancels the guilt of the person's sin and credits righteousness to him.

The only way that righteousness can be obtained is through trusting in Jesus. This is a free gift from God, and not obtained by anything that we are or have done. It is through God's initiative, his grace, or undeserved favour. This happened 'through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Like the lepers we can only come to God relying upon his *mercy*, shown through Jesus' death for us on the cross. Once we have received this gift from God we are called to respond like the Samaritan. In gratitude of **God** and in a relationship with **Jesus** in the power of his **Spirit**.

That gratitude can express itself in so many ways. In praise, worship and adoration of God. In serving him, in our church, our local communities, our families and at work. In sharing with other the good news of Jesus in word and deed.

We need to make sure that we are not just *healed* by Jesus... but that he makes us **well**. That we don't merely selfishly respond to what he has done for us, but respond in adoration and devotion to him as well.

The beauty of gratitude is that: Thanksgiving focuses us beyond our own selfishness, and wants. Mother Theresa told this story in an address to the National Prayer Breakfast in 1994: One evening Theresa and several sisters went out, and they picked up four people from the street. One of them was in a most terrible condition.

Theresa told the sisters, "You take care of the other three; I will take care of the one who looks worst." So, she did for the woman everything that her love could do. She put her in bed, and there was such a beautiful smile on the woman's face. She took hold of Theresa's hand as she said two words only: "***Thank you.***" Then she died. Theresa could not help but examine her own conscience.

She asked herself: What would I say if I were in her place? And her answer was very simple. She would have tried to draw a little attention to herself. I would have said, "***I am hungry, I am dying, I am in pain.***" But the woman gave her much more; she gave Theresa grateful love. And she died with a smile on her face. Even those with nothing can give the gift of thanks.

I think the best way to give **gratitude** is turning our ***Thanksgiving*** into ***Thanks Living***. Ten men were touched by the healing power of Jesus. Only one realized that what had happened deserved a *personal, heartfelt* response to the Saviour. Gratitude is best shown by actions, not words. Final thought: we must love God not only for what God does, but for who God is. And to trust him, even through calamities.

**Stir us to thanks-living, O Lord, teach us to love you for who you are,
and not what you do, and help us to encourage others to come to
you, so that you can make them well. Amen.**

Have A Happy Thanksgiving.

October 11, 2020