

**“ONE SAID THANK YOU.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church**

**November 22, 2020, 9 and 10:30 AM**

**Text for the Sermon: Luke 17:11-19**

**Prayer:** Father, on the Mount of Transfiguration your voice was heard saying, “This is my Son whom I love, listen to Him.” Father, today by the power and help of your Holy Spirit enable us to listen to the Word of your Son and to truly hear Him for no one has ever spoken as He did. Give us ears to hear what your Spirit is saying to our church today. In Jesus name. Amen.

**Introduction.**

I feel I can relate to the plight of these ten lepers more now than ever before. In our house we have felt like we need to walk around saying unclean, unclean. Keep your social distance. In fact many of us can sympathize with this text in new ways.

We will look at this text in two parts.

**Luke 17:11-14, ten who were healed; the cause of thanksgiving. Prayer/Petition.**

*On the way to Jerusalem.*

We are reminded of the humanity of Jesus, walking on the way to His final trip to Jerusalem well aware of what awaits Him there. We are reminded that the world Jesus walked in is much like ours as He walks along the borders of Samaria and Galilee, a region divided by race and racism.

We are reminded that Jesus experienced life much like we do. You are making your way through your day and then stuff happens, interruptions, sickness, Covid, people with serious problems, death staring you in the face, the messiness of life.

This is life, this is Jesus’ life. Jesus doesn’t look away, skirt the issue, say He is too busy, or that He doesn’t have time because He has to be some place. He is the with us God. Wherever we are, whatever we are doing, however hard or complicated or stressful He is right there.

*Ten Lepers.*

Leprosy was a horrible, disfiguring disease, there can hardly be a more miserable condition. It was a cause of great humiliation and shame. They had to walk about calling out unclean. They could not work and were completely dependent on charity. Besides the painful physical effects, there were huge psychological effects on one’s mental health from the isolation.

This was the ultimate quarantine situation. Lepers were social distanced from everyone else, cast outside the community, alone. Cut off from all human contact.

Do we think 6 feet is annoying? One source says the distance for lepers was 50 yards. Can you imagine lines every 50 yards at Safeway or Costco or here?

***Have mercy on us.***

They know enough about Jesus that He is a worker of miracles. They know enough about their own condition to know their desperate need.

“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” That is a good prayer, that’s as good a prayer as ever prayed. It’s a prayer Jesus hears, understands, and is ready to answer in the best way we need.

Imagine if these men had never cried out, never asked for mercy. Imagine them just limping through their miserable existence on their own, never once turning to God and acknowledging their need of Him. Nothing would have changed, they would have stayed the same.

How many of us are in situations that never change because we never ask, we never seek help higher than ourselves, we never humble ourselves to ask for mercy?

Prayer is the most practical work we can ever do. For that reason prayer should be our first work, not our last resort, just as God should be the first one sought after, not the last one.

Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pain we bear;  
All because we do not carry, Everything to God in prayer.

“Some oppression will not lift without prayer.  
Some wounds will not heal without prayer.  
Some trials will not end without prayer.  
Some sins will not die without prayer.  
Some relationships will not mend without prayer.  
Some things will not change, things we desperately want to change, without prayer.  
What hasn’t yet changed in your life because you haven’t yet prayed?” (Marshall Segal).

God is the most powerful agent of change in any of our lives and prayer is access to His power. God has chosen to do much of His changing work through our prayers.

This simple, humble prayer “Lord, have mercy on us” is one Jesus is pleased to answer and it made all the difference in the lives of these ten lepers.

***Show yourselves to the priests.***

We see here Jesus’ tenderness toward outcasts, toward the down and out, toward those least deserving of mercy and kindness. Jesus is a friend of sinners.

This is an obvious reference to the Law of Moses in Leviticus 13-14. Priests were the CDC, the health department, they were appointed by God to be the judges of who was clean and unclean. Only the priests could pronounce them clean and able to return to human community.

Notice how this miracle is different from most of the other one's Jesus did. Notice no touching, no commands for the disease to depart, no command to go wash. Jesus tells them to take a step of faith before there is even the slightest evidence of Him doing anything for them. They were to believe in Jesus' power before they saw or felt any evidence of it.

This is Jesus' call to all of us. We calls us to faith, to believe in Him in our hearts, to trust in Him in our souls before having any tangible fruit from that faith. We believe in Him for our salvation, we have faith in Him for our forgiveness before there is any sign of it.

They show a real faith in turning to go to the priest, which would be pointless if they were not healed. So they start on their way believing their healing will come before they get there. The words of Jesus had the power to heal, and as soon as they obeyed, they were healed.

How simple yet how hard. Childlike obedience in the face of a simple command. How often do we argue or take issue with or disagree with or doubt the simple commands of Jesus?

Read God's Word, pray faithfully, attend the gathering together of the saints on the Lord's Day. Love your neighbor and your enemy. Do good. Do as God has said and see what healing comes to your mind, soul and spirit. Trust and obey. Take to heart the example of these men.

**Luke 17:15-19, one who was saved; the character of thanksgiving. Praise.**

*One of them turned back praising God and thanking Jesus.*

Was he raised better? Better manners? Was he more aware of his need and his unworthiness? Was he struck by the racial differences and the kindness of a Jew toward a Samaritan?

Nine were so thrilled with their gift and their eagerness to return to the community they neglected the giver of their gift. But this Samaritan draws apart and interrupts his journey to come back and take time to remember his deliverer. They loved the gift, he loved the giver.

It would appear that the nine were Jews and the one was a foreigner, a Samaritan. The implication may be that he would have been the last one expected to return and thank a Jewish healer.

Why was a Samaritan associating with Jews? It is common knowledge that Jews and Samaritan had no dealings with one another at all. But misery loves company. Affliction draws people together. There are things more important in life that cause us to forget our differences. Our common condition as sinners and our common need of God should draw us together.

Where are the nine? Is thankfulness really this rare, only one in ten, only 10%? Who are we most like?

Unthankfulness is common of disease, a common sin. We see it in our homes, in our children, in our marriages, in our churches and in our country. If we are honest we see it in ourselves. Is anything so commonly forgotten as giving thanks?

We are often quick to pray and ask, and forgetful when the Lord answers. King David and the Apostle Paul were two very thankful men, thanks fills their writings. Remember Paul's admonition regarding prayer.

**Philippians 4:6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with *thanksgiving* let your requests be made known to God.

When we pray, let us pray not only with requests and petitions, but with thanksgiving.

Pray for a thankful spirit, a spirit of thanksgiving. Pray for a thankful heart. Pray for eyes to see what there is in our lives to be thankful about.

We all should be like those lepers and know how deep our troubles are, how undeserving we are, then our hearts won't be able to stop giving thanks.

The person who every day realizes he has been forgiven another million dollar debt, is the person who rejoices and gives thanks. The person who daily knows he deserves hell, this is the one who praises God with loudest voice.

Each one of us should say in our hearts, "There should be no one on earth who loves God as much as I do, because there is no one on earth who has been forgiven as much as I have."

This is one thing Sunday is for. Sunday is that day we turn back, turn back from the noise, hurry and crowds, turn back from the busyness, distractions, interruptions. This is the day we turn back from all that is going on in our lives and give a personal, heartfelt response to our personal God and Savior Jesus Christ.

This is the day each week we realize that what Jesus has done for us deserves our extra attention, when we stop thinking only about ourselves and what we want, that think about and thank God.

This is the day we have the common decency to return and repay God's benefits with gratitude.

This is the day each week, and Thursday is the special day each year when we come together and lift our voices in praise and thanks.

We ought to be as vociferous and generous and quick with our praise and thanks to Jesus for all His blessings and benefits. This is why we must sing, we can't help ourselves.

Notice the characteristics of thankfulness exhibited by this one man. It is amazing how instructive to our souls this one small act is.

It is personal, he came himself and gave personal thanks, it is real, his heart is in it.

It is prompt, quick. If we don't give thanks quickly we often forget to at all.

It puts first things first, Jesus before the priests.

It is evidenced by its intensity, with loud voice. Not cool, lukewarm.

It is humble, falling at the feet of Jesus. It bows down. Thanks grows out of humility.

It is worship, praise. When we thank God for what He has given, we glorify Him.

It is silent in speaking ill of others. He doesn't answer where the others are. He doesn't make himself look better by making others look worse.

A person who gives thanks shows themselves to be a person of faith.

A person who gives thanks shows themselves to be a person sensible to the goodness of God.

A person who gives thanks shows themselves to be a person who triumphs over earthly trials.

A person who gives thanks shows themselves to be accomplishing man's highest purpose on earth, to glorify God.

God showers down His blessings and benefits on us all day long, all week long, all year long.

Too often we receive them without a thought, without a consideration of where they come from.

We don't consider whose love has done this.

*Your faith has made you well.*

The word is stronger than this, your faith has made you *whole*. This means more than just being healed from leprosy. You can be well in body and still sick in spirit/soul. It is possible the others were healed in body, but not saved. This man was saved.

He is sent away with a second and greater blessing. Something we all receive when we return gratitude and praise and worship to our God. The others in their forgetfulness missed it.

Ingratitude, ungratefulness, thanklessness, ungraciousness all infect the health of the soul and keep us from being whole.

Earnest prayers of faith and praise returned by faith, reap double and sweeter rewards, healing of body and soul, deliverance and salvation.

The greatest sinners are the greatest praisers. He who has been forgiven much loves much and loves loudly, openly.

## **Implications and application.**

You understand of course that leprosy is a common symbol of sin, of the defiling, polluting, destroying disease that leads to death. As leprosy separated them from the community, so sin separates us from God and causes death.

We must have the same assessment of our spiritual condition, cast off, cut off from God, outside of fellowship with Him. If we would see ourselves as these ten lepers saw themselves we would pray like they do. We only pray when we have a clear sense of our need. Lacking that, we neglect so great a gift. And from so great a gift we have cause for great praise.

Last week we talked about restitution and asked the question, to whom might we owe restitution. This week we could ask the question, to whom do we owe gratitude, an expression of thanks for some grace, some kindness, some gift, given even long ago. Is there someone who has done something for us that we cannot repay, and to whom we have given no expression of thanks?

Is there someone who have done something or given something and we have only appreciated the gift and not the person who gave it?

Most of all what thanks do we owe God? Do we at the very least offer a sincere prayer of thanks at each meal? Have we neglected the giver of all good things because of all our things?

**Psalm 103:2-5** Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,  
3 who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,  
4 who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,  
5 who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

May praise be as much on our lips as prayers and petitions.

May much praise and thanks fill our hearts and lips this day, this week and yes, even this year.

**Psalm 50:14** Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

**Psalm 50:23** The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me.

**Hebrews 13:15** Through [Jesus] then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God.

**Prayer:** Holy Father, send your Holy Spirit upon us I pray. Cleanse us of our thanklessness, and how that betrays a lack of faith or trust in your perfect providence in our lives. Restore in us the joy of your salvation and let this season be the new beginning of joy and thanksgiving in fellowship with you and your people. Prepare us to come to our tables this Thursday and to your table next Sunday with excessive joy and celebration that staggers even the minds of angels. Open our hearts to this great joy.