

ONLY ONE GIVES THANKS? WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS?

Luke 17: 11-19

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Ready or not to give thanks: One day a woman was rushing home from a doctor's appointment. The doctor was late, and the lab work took a little longer than usual, so by the time she left the clinic she was running quite a bit behind schedule. She still had to get her prescription, collect the children from the baby-sitter, and get home and put supper on the table, all in time to make it to the prayer meeting at her church that evening. As she began to circle the busy Wal-Mart parking lot, looking for a space, it began to rain cats and dogs.

While she wasn't usually the type to bother God with small problems, she began to pray as she turned down the row closest to the front door. "Lord, you know what kind of a day I've had, and there's still an awful lot to do. Lord, please grant me a parking space right away, oh, and close to the building so I don't get soaked." The words weren't even completely out of her mouth when she saw the backup lights of a car come on at the end of the row. It was the best space in the whole parking lot, right next to the handicap spots and straight out from the front door. She pulled right in and said, "never mind God, something just opened up."

Stopping and Reflecting: When the ten lepers were healed, their lives changed more dramatically than we can imagine. These men were inflicted with the most dreaded disease at that time. Leprosy was an incurable and revolting disease because you actually watch your body rot away. You die a slow and painful death, separated from family, friends and society. The only friends you had were the other lepers. The disease was so serious that people at the time believed that if one had leprosy they were a terrible sinner and God was punishing them for something really bad. Jesus, however, did not see it that way because God's nature is grace and he does not hold our sins against us, or condemn us for our sins.

These lepers knew that Jesus was a healer. They must have thought that he was the only chance they had to escape the terrible consequences of having that disease. They kept their distance and called out to Jesus (verse 13b), "*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!*" When he saw them he said, "*Go and show yourselves to the priests.*" All ten of them were certainly obedient to listen to Jesus' command. As soon as they started to go, they were experienced healing. They must have been filled with joy as they bounded down the road to see the priest! But one of them stopped and came back, bowed down to Jesus with a loud voice and praised God!

The question then is asked of each of us: How are you praising God and giving thanks? We do it in worship when we sing. Some of us will go into an outside open place and praise the Lord with shouts of joy. Let's say together, "Praise God! Praise God from whom all blessings flow!" One of the ten lepers reflected on what just happened. He wanted to thank Jesus personally! How are you mindful of Jesus' presence and blessings in your life? It is important that one reflects on daily life. As believers, it is important to question how you see God present in your life.

A technique called 'The Examen Prayer' was a daily prayer-filled mindfulness exercise encouraged by St. Ignatius Loyola about 400 years ago. The Examen Prayer is a prayerful reflection technique where one reflects on the events of the day in order to discern God's direction in one's life. A part of this reflection is about thanking God for how God has blessed you this past day in the people you met, the food you ate and the experiences you had throughout the day.

Seeing beyond the Gift to the Giver: It is important that we see beyond the gift of healing itself and look towards the giver. Through the gift of healing the lepers changed their lives from that time forward, the one who provided it (Jesus) was the true gift. When the one leper came back and gave thanks, Jesus asked, *"Were not ten made clean? But where are the other nine?"* We can respond by saying that Jesus only asked the 10 to show themselves to the priest. He did not ask them to thank him (the giver). I believe Jesus wanted them to look beyond the gift to the giver, because that is where the complete healing takes place.

Then, Jesus said to the one who returned, *"Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."* The Greek word "sesoken" comes from the root word "sozo", and can be translated as "healed", "made well", or "saved". In the King James Version of the Bible we read, *"Your faith has made you whole."* We can conclude from this last statement of Jesus that the physical healing is a small part of the complete healing that had taken place for this one leper. The healing Jesus gave to the Lepers was not only physical, but also spiritual!

Why would you not thank? The only leper who thanked Jesus was the one everyone would least expect – the foreigner, the Samaritan. I believe that sometimes we get so distracted by our own needs, and what is good for us, life becomes all about us and what we are entitled to. Then spiritual blindness can enter and we lose sight of the one who actually gives us life and sustains our lives. The daily demands in our physical life distract us from what really matters - the Kingdom of God! In the busyness and stresses of life, we fail to see the bigger picture of Jesus' love and faithfulness to us and the need to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Closing the circle of Grace: This Bible story is a story about grace. Jesus was disappointed that only 1 out of 10 came back to give thanks. Jesus was not disappointed because he wanted recognition of this great healing. No, Jesus was saddened because He desires for us to give thanks to God (the giver) because it is good for us! Giving thanks is good for you because it saves you from yourself and your attitude of entitlement! Giving thanks shows that your eyes are open beyond the temporary healing to see the complete healing coming from the giver of life.

The gifts of God through Jesus Christ are given to us regardless of whether we give thanks for them or not. Giving thanks, however, makes all the difference!

Tell others the Good News. Shout it out like the thankful leper! "Hallelujah". Let's practice, "Hallelujah, Amen." Tell others what the Lord has done for you. Please consider practicing "The Examen Prayer". If you practice this with your family, you can remind one another to do it each day. Examine your life and see what the Lord (the giver) has done and is doing in your daily life. Pray and give thanks. Amen.