**Text**: Luke 17:11-19
**Title**: The Thankful Samaritan
**Truth**: True faith in God glorifies Him by giving thanks.
**Date/Location**: Wed 11/22/2006 and Sunday 12/15/2024 at FBC

## Introduction

Here is a firsthand account from Edward Winslow, December 11, 1621, after the first harvest of the Pilgrims:

> "Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest King Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful as it was this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."[1]
>
> Winslow goes on to explain many of the abundances they enjoyed in the new land and the blessing of peace with the Indians and amongst the Indians themselves.
>
> He then adds this: "These things I thought good to let you understand, being the truth of things as near as I could experimentally take knowledge of, and that you might on our behalf give God thanks who hath dealt so favorably with us.

When I study a portion of Scripture, I see that study Bibles and commentaries often will place a helpful heading on the passage, like this one: "Ten Lepers Cleansed" or "Healing of the Lepers." I chose a variation on the good Samaritan by calling the message "The Thankful Samaritan." More important for our purposes, we

[1] http://mayflowerhistory.com/letter-winslow-1621

want to label the section with a reminder of what it teaches us. What would you call it?

## I. Background, v. 11-12

A. Luke continues his record of Jesus' travels toward Jerusalem which he began in Luke 9:51. We see waypoints along the journey in Luke 13:22 and here in 17:11, 18:31, 19:11 and finally 19:28. The journey was not without its difficulties. For example, the Samaritans did not want to receive Jesus into their territory at this time (Luke 9:52). Note the prominence of the one Samaritan in our passage.

As a result, Jesus passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee, meaning "passing *between* Samaria and Galilee." He was threading the needle, if you will, or going around the outskirts of Samaria where He was unwelcomed. So, he was in proximity to a place where a Samaritan would have originated.

B. Leprosy in the Bible is thought by many to be Hansen's Disease, caused by *Mycobacterium leprae* and *Mycobacterium lepromatosis*. It may get into the nerves, causing nerve damage, as well as depigmentation of the skin, lesions, loss of feeling, paralysis in hands and feet, and other effects on skin, eyes, and lining of the nose.

It does *not* cause appendages to fall off spontaneously or the skin to "rot." What can happen is that nerve damage can deaden sensitivity to pain in fingers and toes so that injuries go unnoticed, something like what neuropathy can do to a diabetic's foot where it gets injured and then infected and require amputation. In extreme cases, the fingers and toes weaken to the point that the body reabsorbs them.

Most people (95%) exposed to the bacteria do not get the disease due to natural immunity. If someone has it, it may take 20 years to develop signs of the disease! It is not highly contagious. And a course of antibiotics for 1-2 years can cure it. People who have it could feasibly "cure themselves" if their immune system becomes stronger. Nonetheless, permanent nerve and other damage can

happen which will not heal. Despite these facts, a stigma remains upon those who have it.

Biblical leprosy is probably more general than the specific clinical definition of Hansen's disease, but we will not demand modern scientific precision in a document of the time.

C. These men stood "afar off" at the outskirts of the village where Jesus was. Perhaps there was a nearby colony as there are in India (an estimated 750 of them). These people would be considered ritually or religiously unclean and as such would be social outcasts. The Law of Moses commanded them to reside outside of the main camp of Israel (Lev. 13:45-46).

D. The Bible devotes a lengthy section of the law to the diagnosis and cleansing of leprosy-type diseases in Leviticus 13-14. If a person were healed of the leprosy, he or she would go to the priest and be examined and offer the prescribed offering as a testimony to them (Luke 5:12-14)—and no doubt as a testimony of thanks to God.

## II. The Miracle: Almost a Minor Point, v. 13-14

A. "It happened" (v. 11) hardly indicates a coincidence, though seemingly so from our perspective. In fact, v. 14 uses the same phrase, saying, "and so it was that as they went, they were cleansed." This is no happenstance: it is by divine decree.

B. They addressed the Lord with respect, "Jesus, Master." He is Lord and master (John 13:13).

C. They asked for healing by way of saying, "Have mercy on us!" Sometimes those are the only words you can muster.

D. Jesus is so powerful as the Son of God that He healed them with His word – ten men healed in one short sentence of five Greek words, and he did not even say "be cleansed" or anything of that sort. He simply told them to go to the priests, skipping past the healing part which at that moment He was doing, to get to the part that was their responsibility.

E. The implication that if they went, they would be healed—and they knew it. So, they went on their way and were healed as they went.

F. “Cleansed” of v. 14 = “Healed” of v. 15. Jesus told them to follow the Law given by Moses and see the priests about this cleansing.

G. Going to the priests (plural) indicate that there were several priests, perhaps in different jurisdictions where they lived. These priests were responsible to oversee purification for people who had various problems of health or infestations in their homes, etc.

## III. Thankfulness: A Major Point, v. 15-19

A. The nine who were healed went and completed the necessary steps with the priests. They had a big incentive to do this so that they could be brought back into normal society. But the lone leper paused along the way:

1. Saw he was healed.
2. He returned to the Lord.
3. Glorified God with a loud voice. To glorify means to praise and magnify.
4. He fell at Jesus’ feet and on his face. Notice please the posture of thanks—similar to the various postures of prayer that we see in the Scriptures—flat on the floor, or on your knees, or with head bowed, or with hands raised, or with eyes looking up to heaven. Here the man fell down at Jesus’s feet in a picture of humble homage. Would you do that?
5. Gave Him thanks, a form of glorifying (Heb. 13:15 indicates that praise and thanksgiving are tied together).

**Side note: What is *thanks*?**

1. *Observe* something done for your benefit;
2. *Recognize* the one from whom the blessing came (hint: it is not “your lucky stars”);
3. Have an *attitude* of gratitude, not one of entitlement; and
4. Make an *acknowledgement* of appreciation to the one responsible.

Any of the elements missing indicates a lack of appropriate thankfulness. If you miss #1, you will not have 2 or 3 or 4. If you

have 1 but miss 2, you will not do #4 rightly even if you have #3. You may have 1 and 2 and 3, but you can still forget 4. Maybe you have 1 and 3 and all you have is a generic attitude of "thankfulness" but no specific direction for the thanksgiving to flow so you falter on #2 and 4.

The leper had the first three of these when he saw that he was healed, before he returned to the Lord. He returned to Jesus to make a public acknowledgement of appreciation.

B. The sequence of the Lord's reply is:

1. Why did only one out of the ten return? This indicates disappointment. And why is the one who returned a *Samaritan*? The Jewish people should be thankful too. He came to His own…but His own did not receive Him! Instead, just a foreigner came.

2. Only 10% returned to give glory to God. And that one was a foreigner, not even one of Jesus' own people. Jesus did not limit His good works to Jews only.

3. "Arise…go your way." The Lord received the man's thanksgiving and allowed it to be complete. Jesus now encouraged him to go on living.

4. "Your faith has made you well." This is a shorthand that indicates that faith was the channel through which God's power was exercised (Matt. 13:58). This faith was saving faith, not just healing faith. The Bible records this type of thing several times (for example, a woman sick for 12 years, a blind man). The Samaritan really believed in the Lord, savingly so.

5. The other nine were healed but were only looking to Jesus for temporal benefits, not eternal ones. Their focus was on themselves, not Jesus. "Solve my problem please," but not "I give my life and worship to you." They received only a temporal benefit from the Lord, but the Samaritan had something that will last far into the future.

## IV. Application

One hundred percent of us need to be thankful for ALL of God's benefits.

A. Thankfulness toward others

1. Teach our kids to be thankful.
2. Practice it in marriage.
3. Practice it in the church.
4. Model it in the workplace.

B. Thankfulness toward God

1. Thankfulness to Whom? God!

   Col. 1:3, 12, 1 Thess. 1:2, 3:9, Rev. 4:9, 7:12, 11:17
   A trait of the unsaved person is that he/she is not thankful to God (Rom. 1:21) and does not have thankful speech to others (Eph. 5:4).

2. When?

   Before eating a meal: Mat. 15:36, Mark 8:6, John 6:11, 23, Acts 27:35, 1 Tim. 4:3-4.
   During the Lord's Table: Matt. 26:27, Mark 14:23, Luke 22:17-19, 1 Cor. 11:24.
   In Prayer: Philippians 4:6, Col. 4:2.
   In everything you do, Col. 3:17.
   Eph. 5:20: "Always, for all things."

3. For What?

   For creating us, Psalm 100:3-4.
   For saving us, Rev. 5:9.
   For sending the Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. 9:15.
   For God's attributes, Ps. 97:12 (holiness), 103:1, 8 (mercy).
   For other Christians, Phil. 1:3.
   For all people, 1 Tim. 2:1.
   For victory over death and sin (1 Cor. 15:57, 2 Cor. 2:14).
   In everything, 1 Thess. 5:18. (not *for* everything per se!).

4. Why?

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! (1 Chron. 16:34).
Give thanks to the Lord, for His mercy endures forever (Psalm 136:1).

## Conclusion

Take note of the power of Jesus demonstrated here. We should also observe carefully that the Lord cared about these people, as He does about all who are afflicted and cry out for mercy.

Let us not be like the unthankful lepers. They received a gift from God's Son but were not thankful. Much better to receive God's good gifts *and* to be thankful for them!

If you do not know what Jesus did for you, you will not be able to recognize the value of it. You will not know enough to have the opportunity to be thankful. If you *do* know about Jesus but do not recognize the value of Him or His hard work on your behalf, you will also not be thankful. In the end, I am confident that you do not really want to live your life as an ungrateful person. There is no happiness nor joy there and sensible people really do not enjoy being around someone who is unthankful. More importantly, God is displeased with a selfish, ungrateful way of living.

We return to the question about how you would label this section of Scripture. We want something better than "the healing of the ten lepers." That tells *what* happened at the narrative level, but it does not tell us the lesson we should learn, the truth or significance of the passage. What does God want us to get out of this section of the Bible? How about "True faith in God glorifies Him by regularly giving thanks"?

MAP