

**Subject: *Reasons to Give Thanks***

**Scripture: *Luke 17:11-19***

This story is found only in the Gospel of Luke. It is a remarkable story that reminds us how important it is to be grateful for God's blessings. We need to cultivate an attitude of gratitude. A little boy was in a food line at church and he asked for dessert. A nice lady served him a big piece of cake. He said, "Thank you, Ma'am." She was so impressed with his manners and said, "I just love to hear a young man say Thank You." He grinned and said, "Put some ice cream on it and I'll say it again." This story is about a man who remembered to say Thanks. Let's look at some important reasons why all of us need to give thanks to the Lord.

### **1. Because Christ comes to us in our need**

Christ passed through Samaria and Galilee on His way to Jerusalem. He entered a certain village where He met these ten lepers. This was not chance. It was a divine appointment. Have you ever thought about where Jesus went in His three years of ministry? He didn't go everywhere. He didn't go where He was always welcome. He didn't go where the big crowds would greet Him. He went where the Father wanted Him to go.

**Luke 19:10** *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

**John 1:11** *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

Why did many of the Jews not receive Him? Because they were not aware of their need. Many of them were self-righteous and self-satisfied.

### **2. Because Christ hears our plea for mercy**

When Jesus entered this village, ten lepers met Him. They were standing a great distance from everyone else. They were outcasts and as they lived from day to day, they cried out "Unclean, unclean!" What a terrible way to live. When Jesus showed up, they knew who He was and they knew that He could help them, so they cried out (shouted), "Have mercy on us."

**Luke 18:13** *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

**Isaiah 55:7** *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Mercy is based on need, not what we deserve. They realized that Jesus was not obligated to look their way or help them, so they appealed to His mercy. People often think that God owes them something (so many years of life, good health, or a certain amount of money). Actually, we deserve nothing from God. The secret of gratitude is to expect nothing. Anything this side of Hell is mercy. Paul's testimony is our testimony, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10).

### **3. Because Christ does what we cannot do for ourselves**

Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priests. As they obeyed and went, all ten of them were healed of their leprosy. Jesus sent them to the priests not to be healed, but to be pronounced clean. We find the background to this in Leviticus 13, where a person would let the priest examine him if he thought he had leprosy or if he thought he was in remission and cured of the dread disease. The priests determined who had leprosy and who was healed of the disease. For centuries the priests must have wondered why Leviticus 13 was a part of Scripture. Hardly anyone had ever been healed of leprosy.

We know that Moses' sister Miriam was healed of leprosy, and we read about Naaman the leper from Syria who was healed in the days of the prophet Elisha. But other than these isolated cases, we don't read of anyone being healed of leprosy. When Jesus walked this earth, things were different. One leper after another was sent to the priests to be examined and pronounced clean. All the evidence should have made it easy for them to believe in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God.

Leprosy was a dreaded disease. The Bible calls it "the plague of leprosy." It is a picture of sin and its effects:

A. Leprosy (sin) permeates

It affects every part of our lives. At first leprosy appeared as an irritation (redness) of the skin, but the problem was more than skin deep. Sin affects every part of our lives. This is what we call human depravity. All people are not as bad as they could be, but we are all as bad off as we can be. Paul described the sin nature.

**Romans 7:18-20** <sup>18</sup> *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.* <sup>19</sup> *For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.* <sup>20</sup> *Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

Indwelling sin is the problem. We sin because we have a sin nature.

B. Leprosy (sin) contaminates

That's why lepers were separated from other people. But it doesn't work that way with sin. We can't separate from sin and isolate ourselves.

**1 Corinthians 5:9-11** <sup>9</sup> *I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:* <sup>10</sup> *Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.* <sup>11</sup> *But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.*

• Leprosy (sin) debilitates

It was a devastating disease. It could not be reversed and apart from God's intervention, it could not be healed.

**Romans 6:23** *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Only Jesus can cure a person with leprosy. Only Jesus can make a sinner clean.

#### **4. Because most people will not give thanks**

Ten men were healed, but only one man returned to give thanks. About 1 out of 10 people are truly thankful for what they have. Even among Christians, most people are not thankful. The Bible says that in the last days people will be ungrateful.

**2 Timothy 3:1-2** <sup>1</sup> *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. <sup>2</sup> For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy.*

When Paul describes the pagan world this was one the main indictments against them—they were unthankful.

**Romans 1:21** *Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

Of all people, Christians should be the most thankful. A thankful person always stands out in the crowd. If you are a thankful young person you will stand out. If you are a thankful employee you will stand out. If you are a thankful husband, wife, or child you will stand out and be different than most. If you don't give thanks, who will?

#### **5. Because Christ deserves and expects our thanks**

When this one leper realized he had been healed, he turned back and fell at Jesus' feet to give Him thanks. Christ deserved that. He didn't wait for others to thank the Lord. He didn't care what others might think or say. Nothing was going to stop him from giving thanks.

What a sad thing for Jesus to ask, "Where are the nine?" His heart was broken, and His heart is always broken whenever we fail to give thanks. There is one final thing to notice in the story. This man was a Samaritan, the least likely of all the men to stop and give thanks. Jesus called him "a stranger" (vs. 18). That was like calling him a Gentile or pagan. Apparently the other nine were Jews.

One reason why people are not thankful is they focus on their burdens instead of their blessings. So many carry their blessings, but count their burdens. When we ought to carry our burdens and count our blessings.

**1 Thessalonians 5:18** *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*