

## THE CHRISTIAN AND THANKSGIVING

Luke 17.11-19

Statistics now tell us that about 2/3's of working people are dissatisfied with their jobs and over 1/2 the people in our nation are unhappy.

Maybe they should think about those who work-out on a limb. (pic-men working on a tower or skyscraper.)  
Or how about those who work in sort a-maybe kind of cramped conditions, hemmed in on all sides. (pic-desks side by side and in front and back of each other.)  
Or how about those who get blamed for everything; they are the target of blame, (pic-man holding up target for others to shoot at), whether it's at work, at school, in the game, at home, with family or friends, or even in the church.

Maybe some of those unhappy folks would be a little bit more grateful if the thought about others.

So, today we want to talk about being grateful, about gratitude.

In this sermon series we have been studying  
the words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount  
And we've been talking about the character of a Christian, the DNA of a Christian.

Today we're going to use the story of the 10 lepers to talk about another characteristics of a Christian's DNA, GRATITUDE.

Gratitude is one of the most prized of a person's spiritual characteristics, and gratitude is one of the purest measures of a person's spiritual condition.

### GRATITUDE STARTS WITH RECOGNIZING OUR NEED

Luke 17, verse 11-13, "*Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance (They were some distance away) and called out in a loud voice, Jesus, Master, have pity on us.*" (Their voices would have been raspy and hoarse-they would have been pleading)

These men obviously knew they had a need and they asked for help.  
Leprosy is a devastating disease in many ways.

Physically there would be ulcers, open sores or rough scaly patches of skin. The nerves could be damaged and so there would be no feeling in the extremities.

So fingers, toes, nose, ears, eyelids, and lips might fall off.

There were social consequences as well.

A person with leprosy was quarantined and put in a leper's colony, away from "normal" society, away from what was familiar most days.

Emotionally that person was cut off from family and friends.

Think about not being able to hug your wife, hold your babies, or play with your children. You couldn't even just be in the same room.

And lepers suffered spiritually as well.

In their culture if you had health, wealth, and babies it was thought you were in right standing with God

If you didn't have health, wealth, and babies, you were out of sync with God, you'd committed some great sin.

The lepers recognized their need for healing and asked for healing.

We have needs too. Needs beyond our physical needs.

What are some of our greatest needs?

To be loved? to be accepted? To be forgiven?

To be reconciled to God? To have worth? To find meaning?

We all would do well to ask for healing and not just for our bodies, but ask for healing of our minds and spirits as well

### **Second GRATITUDE RECOGNIZES WHAT WE HAVE**

Verse 14, "*When he saw them, he said, 'Go show yourselves to the priest.' And as they went, they were cleansed.*"

The word for "saw" means to see, to see with understanding, to recognize.

Now there are a couple of things we want to "see" here.

First, let's take a little detour...

One, Jesus saw, “recognized” the needs of others and responded to that need.  
Do you and I see the need of others and do what we can to help.  
When we “see” others do we really see them, want to know them,  
recognize their needs, and affirm their strengths?

Secondly, the question for us is do we “see” what we have.  
How many times have I heard a person in crisis,  
say they’ve seen someone else in a worse crisis, and so feel blessed.

Carter had cancer and had to spend a lot of time at a children’s hospital.  
It cost his parents and grandparents a lot of money.  
Even after a month there grandpa could say,  
we feel fortunate...there are a lot of folks here worse off than we are.”

GRATITUDE STARTS WITH RECOGNIZING OUR NEED  
GRATITUDE RECOGNIZES WHAT WE HAVE

And Third,

**GRATITUDE IS ABOUT RECOGNIZING THE ONE THAT MET YOUR NEED.**

Verse 15-16,

*“One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back praising God in a loud voice.  
He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him-and he was a Samaritan.”*

It’s kind of tough to tell how he felt about his healing isn’t it?  
I think it is significant that they came pleading in a loud voice for mercy  
and now they come (at least one comes) praising in a loud voice.

Then think about him throwing himself at Jesus’ feet,  
really throwing himself down in front of Jesus.

This guy must have experience hell on earth, the darkest of dark nesses,  
and the greatest bondage of bondages.  
And now he was free, he had experienced the light, and it felt like heaven.

Imagine that someone sitting here today is so thankful they get out of their seats,  
make all kinds of commotion, come down front,  
and lay prostrate before the altar simply. That is basically what this leper did.

That could be our story couldn’t it?

We're like the lepers. They are hanging out under a low lying black cloud of condemnation and because of their disease cut off from those they love. Only we're hanging out under the low lying black cloud of condemnation because of our sin cut off from a God that loves us.

They asked for help, they prayed.  
We can ask for help, we can pray.

Then were healed and we can be healed  
by one and the same, Jesus Christ,  
who healed people 2000 years ago, and still heals people today.

Do you want to hear a contemporary version of this story?  
In October of 1942, somewhere over the Pacific, out of radio range,  
Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, his 8-man crew of the Flying Fortress  
ran out of fuel and crashed in the ocean.

For a month they fought the scorching sun and the stormy sea,  
They struggled with sleepless nights and starved in shark rammed rafts.  
They needed a miracle.

One morning after their daily Bible reading  
Rickenbacker leaned his head back on the raft  
and pulled his hat over his eyes.  
A bird landed on his head. He knew it was a sea gull.

He reached up and grabbed it.  
He and the crew ate it raw and used the bird's intestines for bait to catch fish.  
Rickenbacker and his crew lived to tell the story.

That could be our story too-right?

I mean we're like the crew of the Flying Fortress.  
We're stranded, drifting aimlessly in this sea we call life,  
enduring scorching sun of shame and suffering,  
sleepless nights sorrow, and a whole lot of storms in between.

Like the crew we pray and we read the Book.  
And like the crew, we're rescued.

Rescued by one we've never seen but through his sacrifice we'll never forget.

Captain Eddie Rickenbacher didn't forget.

Each Friday evening about sunset until his death in 1973 you could see an old man walking an old broken pier on the Eastern seacoast of Florida, his bucket filled with shrimp to feed the gulls, descendants of a seagull long ago who one day gave himself up for others.

We don't want to forget either, forget the one who died that we might be rescued.

Each day we need to pay homage to the one who delivered us from sin and death.

We don't do it by walking on a broken pier.

We do it by walking and talking with the one who delivered us.

Why wouldn't everyone do that, why do some forget to say thank you?

It's a good question. You're in good company asking that question. Jesus did.

Jesus even asks about that with three times...verse 17-18,

***“Jesus asks, ‘Were not there ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give thanks than this foreigner?’”***

I suppose Jesus was meaning something like, wow, this foreigner,

this Samaritan, he would be the least likely to come back..

because he comes out of the most corrupt religion and yet he comes back.

### **WHY DON'T SOME RECOGNIZE THAT THEY NEED TO EXPRESS GRATITUDE?**

Well, fear could have been a factor for some.

They're afraid of life. They're afraid to trust.

They don't "love" themselves and can't believe anyone else would either.

Some people have been so used and abused they're not able to trust.

They can't love themselves and don't feel they're loved

They can't trust themselves to accept healing and express thanksgiving.

During Christmas break wayyyy backkk whennn,

alongggg time ago, onnnce upon a timmmme,

I went to college you know. I

came home from college and got together with some friends.

We got a hold of some Xmas presents and we took them to the children's home.

It was surprising to see the look of on their faces.  
Some of those faces were full of sheer joy.  
And some-well their looks were more suspicious and skeptical than surprised,  
full more of hesitation than happiness.  
The looks were more of trustlessness than thankfulness.

And maybe another reason some don't express gratitude  
might be that they are blessed with just too much.  
And too much translates into too spoiled, too busy,  
and too preoccupied to say thank you.  
Everything is taken for granted.  
Besides it's mine, I've earned it, I deserve it, who do I need to thank, anyway.

We just haven't learned to say thank you.  
A mother and her son were in the store.  
The mother bought her son a candy bar and the checker handed it to the little  
boy.  
A teachable moment-right?  
"What do you say to the nice lady?" mom says.  
Little boy, "Charge it."

Lack of contentment is another reason why some people are ungrateful.  
Comparison often erodes contentment and leaves a critical spirit.  
A critical spirit and thankfulness cannot co-exist.

I know when I'm grumpy and grouchy, I'm not very thankful.  
And when I'm thankful it is a lot harder to be grumpy and grouchy.

Paul has it figured out. Philippians 4.11b13 (MSG) says,  
*"...I've learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances.  
I'm just as happy with little as much, with much as little.  
I've found the receipt for being happy whether full or hungry,  
hands full or hands empty.  
Whatever I have, wherever I am,  
I can make it through anything in the one who makes me who I am."*

And finally,

**WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE IT IS A BLESSING OF EXPRESSING GRATITUDE**

Verse 19, *Then Jesus said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."*

**Gratitude** is one of the most **prized** of a person's **spiritual characteristics**, and **gratitude** is one of the **purest** measures of a person's **spiritual condition**. It is a blessing for ourselves and for others to express our gratitude.

A top name singer was on tour.

One of the stops was a leper colony.

The people were obviously pleased and grateful for the benefit performance.

The singer remembers asking for requests.

He remembers one lady raising her hand.

He remembers most of the fingers on that hand were missing.

He remembers seeing her face, or what was left of her face.

He remembers parts of her ears, nose, eyelids, and lips were missing.

He remembers her smile, though grotesque, it was gracious.

And he remembers her raspy voice and whispered words, "Could you sing, Count Your Blessings. I haven't been able to sing Count Your Blessings in a long time."

But most, he remembers singing Count Your Bless different than he ever had before.

I invite you to stand if you are able and sing "Count Your Blessings."

I pray you and I sing it differently than we ever have done before.