

From The Bottom of My Heart I Am Thankful

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Luke 17:11-19

Let me start with these observations:

- Complained about sitting in construction traffic for 4 minutes / Pic of Traffic Jam in LA
- Complained about my 2001 Camry car, its lame no working stereo / Pic of Junkyard Car
- Complained about my cell phone, battery life only one week, why I have 3G internet so slow instead of 4G / Pic of old Rotary phone
- Complained about restaurant food, not enough selection on menu, croutons in salad to dry and crusty / Pic of people eating rice in Africa
- Complained about water at the restaurant, no ice, too much ice / Pic of people drinking water out of a hole
- Last slide says, **“Sometimes thankfulness is all about perspective”¹**

Saying “Thank you” to people can be a habit, and it is a good habit. I was raised in a family who taught me to say “Thank you” whenever I received anything. It is a good habit to say “Thank you.” I wonder if this habit can lose its meaning. Am I really thankful this morning? Am I thankful from the bottom of my heart, really thankful?

I chose a story from Jesus’ life. **Jesus meets 10 lepers who wanted to be healed.** Leprosy those days was a terrible sickness. A leper was isolated from his family and the community. Compared to the past, a lot has changed in its treatment. Antibiotics have made it possible to cure this terrible disease.

In the past, lepers had to **get out the community, be quarantined** and considered outcasts. Lepers used to live together in a community outside the city. They could not see their families; they could not have any connection with the outside world. They were even required to warn passers by shouting, **“Unclean,**

unclean!” The Old Testament gives specific commands about handling the lepers (Numbers 5:2-3). Lepers were forsaken; they were hopeless.

The good news is that even if people avoided them, **Jesus did not. Jesus Christ had compassion towards people.** Jesus was walking towards Jerusalem. We know what that means. He was on his way to the climax of his mission. He knew that Calvary, the toughest part of his mission, was facing him. Yet, Jesus always took the time to respond to the needs of people.

Ten lepers came and **cried out in a loud voice for mercy and compassion.** They were asking for Jesus’ blessing, namely healing from this terrible disease.

Jesus said a simple sentence: **“Go, show yourselves to the priests”**(v14).

He asked them go to the priest. Why? The priest decided whether or not they were completely cured. The priest was the “scanner.” We read on the Old Testament,

“When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a case of leprous disease on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests” (Leviticus 13:2 ESV).

If you continue reading the rest of the passage, you will see that the priest decided if that person was clean or not. Leprosy did *not only* make the person sick, but also made him *ceremonially unclean and defiled*.

Here we see that Jesus did not heal them on the spot; **he tested their faith.** While they were with him, they were not healed. Lepers obeyed Jesus and went. They could definitely stand up and argue with Jesus that nothing had happened to them. No, instead they walked without experiencing the healing. On their way to the priest, they were healed.

Jesus was not just healing these ten lepers physically; Jesus was making it possible for them to go back to **their communities**, to their **families**, and to their **worship at the temple** (ceremonially defiled meant they were considered not ready for worship). No one wanted to touch lepers; no one wanted to talk with them; no

one wanted them. **Jesus cares**; he does the opposite. He meets them, listens to them, talks to them, and gives them the cure and solution. How grateful should one be? How grateful can someone be when he/she experiences such grace and mercy?

Ten lepers were in need of cleansing and healing. Ten were healed, but one of them decided to come back to Jesus.

Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. (Luke 17:15-16 ESV)

He did four things:

- a. **He praised God (worshiped Jesus)**
- b. **He worshiped with a LOUD VOICE (*mega phone* in Greek).**
- c. **He threw himself at Jesus' feet (submission to Jesus).**
- d. **He thanked him (grateful heart) (from the bottom of his heart).**

Where were the nine?

-Perhaps they went to the priest quickly, so they could be reunited with their families as soon as possible.

-Perhaps some had doubts whether this miracle would last. They thought, "Let us wait and see..."

-“I deserve this. Why should I return to that Rabbi who healed me?”

-“Jesus can wait. I have more important things to do after so many years of waiting.”

-Maybe they were afraid to identify themselves with Jesus, who by now was a marked man.³

You can add your reasons for not returning. But the irony is this: these are the ones who came to Jesus with the real faith that Jesus could do something in their life. They came with faith, they left with faith and the miracle happened on the road. They were all healed but only one of them realized that **the miracle of the physical body was not enough.**

Jesus' response was very a tough one:

“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” (Luke 17:17-18 ESV)

Jesus' words sound very harsh: “this foreigner” (*odar*)? Samaritans were not considered a pure race. Jews, Abraham's children, were proud they were the chosen people.

N.T. Wright says:

“Luke doesn't say that they (the nine Jews) were any less cured, but he does imply that they were less grateful. After the lesson in humility comes the lesson in gratitude. Humility, of course, is still built in: only the outsider, only the foreigner, gives God the glory, showing up the Jews whose very name reminded them to praise God (the word 'Judah' in Hebrew means 'praise').²

We can blame the nine for not coming back, but all of us fall in this problem. Are we thankful to God from the bottom of our hearts? Am I thankful for all things: giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:20 ESV)?

Do I recognize that God is the Giver of my gifts, my talents, my life, air, nature... you add yours... Count your blessings, name them one by one...

What was Jesus' response to this grateful heart: **“Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.” (Luke 17:19 ESV)**

Rise, the same Greek word is used for Jesus rising from death. Like the prodigal son, he was dead, and now he was alive again. This “foreigner” realized who Jesus was.

Application:

1. Proud People cannot say Thank you.

Gratitude is the echo of grace reverberating through the hollows of the human heart. But proud people don't need grace. They don't think their hearts are hollow without God.³

Isn't it sad to not have a grateful heart?

“Take care lest you forget the LORD your God ... who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’” (Deuteronomy 8:11-17 ESV)

Humble thyself in the sight of the LORD.

One of the ways I try to stay humble is to remind myself that God is the owner my life, my family, my church, my income...everything. I have to remind myself of this truth everyday.

2. The blessing may become an obstacle

The nine did not make it a priority to come to Jesus. They had faith; they did come to Jesus for healing (blessing); yet the “blessing” became an obstacle.

Watch out that you will not forget who is the “Blesser” of you life?

3. Worship Him with a Megaphone, a loud voice.

Express your thankfulness. Let people know you are grateful to God. Whatever that means in your context. It could mean to testify about Jesus without shame. It could mean being bold instead of politically correct (not necessarily like some of the rude politicians). It could mean singing praises. It could mean to say Thank you by giving generously. There are many ways we can worship God with a MEGAPHONE.

4. Thank Him from the bottom of your heart:

Thank Him. “Hazaravor shnorhkner kezme amen or gntoonim”... Thank Him for His Grace and presence, for salvation and healing, the complete healing, the inner healing that only He can offer. The “foreigner” went healed completely.

Gratitude honors God. Gratitude is the echo of grace as it reverberates through the hollows of the human heart. Gratitude is the unashamed acceptance of a free gift and the heartfelt declaration that we cherish what we cannot buy. Therefore gratitude glorifies the free grace of God and signifies the humility of a needy and receptive heart.⁵

The Table is prepared right now. This table is a Thanksgiving Table. The Lord himself prepared it. Come and be ready to receive Him in your heart.

Amen

1. <http://www.rethinkworship.com/thanksgiving-sunday/>
2. N.T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone*. P 206
3. *ibid* p 206
4. John Piper, *Proud People Don't Say Thanks*, Nov 20, 1983
5. *ibid* John Piper

(Shonohagal em: literally means “I have received grace”)