

## Where Are The Nine?

Luke 17:11-19

This Week's Prayer  
Requests:

**Memory Verse:** Colossians 4:2 - "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving."

**Text:** Luke 17:11-19 - "Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup> Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. <sup>13</sup> And they lifted up *their* voices and said, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' <sup>14</sup> So when He saw *them*, He said to them, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.' And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. <sup>15</sup> And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, <sup>16</sup> and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup> So Jesus answered and said, 'Were there not ten cleansed? But where *are* the nine? <sup>18</sup> Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?' <sup>19</sup> And He said to him, 'Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.'"

### Monday

Would you consider our day and time to be one marked by thanksgiving? Why or why not? What about your own life and family?

We live in a day and in a generation where thankfulness is very seldom expressed. In fact the rule of the day seems to be complaining and an attitude of bitterness and ungratefulness toward others. Often when a person does receive good things they will think of it more as a right or what they justly deserve rather than as an undeserved kindness. This lack of thankfulness seems to be even more pronounced in our country where there is so much abundance and wealth that people tend to take it completely for granted and fail to even realize the extent of the blessings they've received.

Dr. Robert Hill, an author, tells of visiting Bangkok, Thailand, where he was invited to a special celebration given by the King and Queen. His Thai guide, a young man named Joseph, asked several questions as he drove them to the pavilion. He knew a little English and was happy to carry on a conversation. When he asked where the Hills lived, they told him Richmond, Virginia.

"Oh, you are a rich man," said the boy.

Dr. Hill laughed and told him, no he wasn't rich.

Thinking about the story from Dr. Robert Hill, do you consider yourself to be rich? Why or why not?

Dr. Hill recalled, “Then he asked if we owned an automobile, and I told him that we had two cars in our family. His next question was about the house where we lived. I told him it was a rather simple house with ten rooms. He was amazed at its size, and this especially hit home when he related that his family including extended family lived in just two small rooms. Then he asked about our family. We told him that we had four healthy children, two in college and two still at home.”

Joseph was silent for a moment or so, then he replied, “You are a rich man.” Dr. Hill said that he and his wife laughed, but in their hearts they knew that he was right, though they had never thought about it in those terms. He concluded the story with these words, “We were rich. But were we thankful?”

What about in comparison to others throughout this world?

How often are people quick to complain or quick to belittle and take for granted the blessings that they have received? And how often are we oh so slow to be thankful and even ignore the giving of thanks all together.

But, thanksgiving is no small matter to God. There are at least 138 passages of Scripture that deal with the subject of giving thanks. That, Beloved, is enough passages for a pastor to preach for a year and a third, morning and evening, just on the subject of thanksgiving.

How important is thanksgiving to God? Consider our memory verse for this week in giving your answer.

Apparently this is a significant matter to our Lord and Master, and one reason it is so significant is because thanksgiving is a normal part of the worship that is due our God and Creator. And yet how many people have even spent five minutes this day in thankful worship of Him. I hope that those of us reading this lesson are better than the average person, but I can assure that far and away the majority have not even considered it or had even a passing thought about giving thanks to God for His wonderful gifts this day. We need to learn and grab a hold of the significance of having a thankful heart. We need to incorporate it into our worship, glorify God by being thankful in our prayers, and learn to walk daily with a rejoicing thankful heart and attitude rather than a complaining, grumpy, dissatisfied, “When am I going to get all my desires and needs met” attitude. We should be people marked, not by complaining or dissatisfaction, but marked by giving thanks to God for His blessing in our lives.

## Tuesday

The text we want to consider this week is Luke 17:11-19 and the account of Christ healing ten lepers as he was passing through Samaria and Galilee on His way to Jerusalem. There are three key insights that we gain from this text. The first one is this:

How many of the lepers did Jesus cleanse that day?

**1. God mercifully blesses both the thankful and the unthankful** (vv. 11-14, 17-18).

While he is traveling and walking down the road, the Lord meets 10 lepers, who stood afar off from him and lifted up their voices crying out “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” Leprosy, as you know, was a defiling, dangerous, contagious and fearful disease. Anyone suffering from it was required to be cast out from among other people and removed from social contact. A leper was required by Jewish law to wear torn clothing, indicating mourning and grief. They had to leave their hair disordered and unkempt, and if a non leper approached the leper, he had to cover his mouth and cry out “Unclean! Unclean!” warning the person away and preventing contact. Their only associations would be other lepers, and a leper that violated these restrictions and risked exposing a non-leper to contagion could potentially be punished by death. Therefore, these lepers stood afar off and cried out to the Lord from a distance.

What would it have meant for a leper personally to be healed?

So the Lord tells them to go and show themselves to the priests. The priests at the temple had the responsibility under Old Testament law to judge whether a person truly had leprosy or not, and whether the form of leprosy that the person had was dangerous to others or harmless. If a person diagnosed as a leper was later cleansed from leprosy by God, then the priest was responsible for conducting the purification ceremony described in Leviticus 14, a ceremony, incidentally, that beautifully symbolizes the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross. Afterwards, the leper could be returned to Israelite society.

The Bible tells us that all ten of the lepers began going to the temple to show themselves to the priests, and as they went the Lord Jesus performed a miracle on them all, and they were all cleansed of their leprosy. So that by the time they arrived, they would have been healed and able to undergo the purification ceremony, which they undoubtedly did. All ten of them were healed according to verses 14 and 17. So we see that God mercifully blesses the thankful and the unthankful alike.

Does God reserve His blessings only for the thankful, or only for His children?

He healed and blessed all these outcasts equally, including the Samaritan. The Bible makes clear that God does this. Matthew 5:44-45 says, "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust." And Acts 14:16-17, again speaking of God says, "who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without a witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

What is the term that we use to describe God's blessing on all men, believers and unbelievers, thankful and unthankful, children and even enemies alike? What does it mean?

Theologians use the term "common grace" to describe the grace that God pours out on all of humanity equally. It is common because we hold this grace in common with all men. You experience many manifestations of this grace: rain from heaven, food, gladness, the beauty of creation, the comfort of friends, smiles, laughter, the laughter of children, patience from God in the face of your sin, and a thousand other things that each person has in his or her life, that are gifts from God above. He gives blessings abundantly to both the thankful and the unthankful alike. And our responsibility is to recognize these abundant mercies and blessings that God has given to us and to all men, to recognize and acknowledge their source.

If God so generously blesses and gives grace to all people, how should this impact the way that we as His children interact with others?

This morning I woke up beneath warm covers in a bed in a house protected from the weather. I woke up next to a precious wife. I took a shower with warm water and had soap to clean with. There was a toothbrush and toothpaste in the bathroom and I had clothes to put on. In the next room I had two wonderful little sons and a precious girl, any one of which can fill my heart with gladness just at the sight of them. They have toys and books abundantly, clothes and warmth for their bodies. In the kitchen there was food to eat, and there were a dozen other things that I didn't mention. I am rich with blessings from God this day. And even if I didn't have these things, if I were poor and living under different circumstance, I would still have many other blessings. And even if I were living under the most dire circumstances imaginable, I would still have the greatest blessing of all, because every moment outside of hell for a sinner is blessing and mercy, and I am a sinful man. We all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God; and, for those that are accountable to God every moment that there is life there is great blessing and mercy granted to all of us. It is abundant undeserved grace and favor from above.

## Wednesday

So we see that God mercifully blesses both the thankful and the unthankful. There is a second insight from this text:

What is the proper response due God for His blessings?

### **2. The unthankful neglect the worship due God (v. 17-18).**

In verse seventeen, the Lord says, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner.” In the Lord’s question there is a kind of wondering rebuke. And though all of them should have returned to give thanks, the Jews because of their past should have been the quickest and perhaps the most expected. Though Jesus certainly knew what would happen before hand.

Who were the Samaritans?

The people called Samaritans were first given that name and introduced to us in Scripture in 2 Kings 17:24-41. They were a people brought to Samaria by the king of Assyria and settled there in place of the deported Israelites at the time of the captivity. They were a mixed race with a pagan core, who became closely linked to the Jews through intermarriage. Their worship became syncretistic, combining elements of Judaism and paganism.

What was the attitude of the Jews toward Samaritans at the time of Christ?

The relationship between the Jews and Samaritans was traditionally one of hostility, and during the time of Nehemiah the Samaritans built a rival temple on Mount Gerazim. At the time of Jesus Samaritans were publicly cursed and vilified by Jews in their synagogues. Jewish law did not allow them to come before their courts as witnesses, and they could not even be admitted as converts to the Jewish religion. The Jewish people, in general, so despised the Samaritans that most religious leaders claimed and taught that Samaritans as a race were excluded from eternal life.

Thus, one can imagine how a Samaritan might have been slow to return to the Lord and give thanks; and yet, it is the Samaritan who does return to the Lord and the Jewish lepers demonstrate their unthankfulness by the fact that they painfully neglect the worship that is rightfully due to God for His mercy on them, even after so great a miracle and blessing as to actually be cured of leprosy!

To neglect giving praise and thanksgiving after receiving such an incredible gift is really just ugly. Why would someone do that? Perhaps they had a belief that somehow the mercy shown to them by the Lord

Why do people neglect thanksgiving?

Jesus was deserved or merited by them, so they neglected the praise that was due. Maybe they had an attitude of complacency or just indifference toward Him, so they failed to give Him glory.

Unfortunately this kind of ingratitude is common. For example, many years ago a boat was sinking in the freezing waters of Lake Michigan during the cold Michigan winter. No other boats were available, that could get there in time, but a young man was on the shore that day, who braved the frigid water and swam out to the ship. He was able to return a helpless person to the shore, where he was given medical care. Then God did an amazing thing. The young man was granted the strength and energy to do it again. In fact, this man single swam out to the ship and carried back 19 people, who were not able to endure the freezing waters themselves. He saved 19 lives. Then about a year later in an interview with a newspaper reporter, the man reported that not one of the 19 people came to him or otherwise contacted him later to even say, "Thank You!"

Have you ever known people who were greatly blessed by God, perhaps in your church, and who even called Jesus "Lord and Master" at one point, but then drifted away in neglect and unthankfulness?

It is a sad thing when people neglect such an important thing; and, it is my hope that we as a people won't be among those that others look around and say, "Hey, where is..... or Whatever happened to.... or Have you seen...."

"Where are the nine? What happened to the other nine lepers? Where are the people that have been so greatly blessed by God here in the past? Whatever happened to the one that recognized the goodness of God, when she heard His word? Where did she go? What ever happened to the one that came forward feeling the grace and warmth and favor of God and dedicated his life to worship and faithful service? What ever happened to that person?"

How can we avoid this sinful hardness of heart in our own lives?

There are many men and women, who at one point seem very interested and even devoted to Christ, calling him "Master" even as these lepers did, and then they seem to drift away in unthankfulness. They neglect the worship that is His due. And others are left standing around saying, "Where is so and so ...? Have you seen ...."

How can we avoid developing unthankful hearts? Here is an interesting thought. There was a woman named Barbara Ann Kipfer who began keeping a list of things she was thankful for as a teenager. Soon the list became second nature; she found herself making additions while riding the bus, eating breakfast, and even in the middle of the night. Twenty years and dozens of spiral notebooks later, her list was published as a

book titled “14,000 Things To Be Happy About.” You may not want to walk around with a notebook, but you can walk around with this attitude; and, you may not want to write things down, though that might be helpful, even if you just write down one thing a day, but you can always say a simple prayer thanking God.

### Thursday

Is thanksgiving a mark of genuine salvation? Why or why not?

This brings us to a third insight from the text, which is also the most important:

### **3. The thankful worship God and display saving faith** (vv. 15-16, 19).

The thankful worship God and display saving faith. The characteristics of a truly thankful person are shown vividly in verses 15-16 and 19.

First, the thankful person is one that “returns.” He is one that will come back to meet with the one that blessed him. He will expend time and energy and effort to seek God out in worshipful thanksgiving. And this will apply, I believe, to both personal and corporate worship.

What are some characteristics of a truly thankful person?

Second, the thankful person gives glory to God; that is, he or she gives credit to the one to whom credit is due. He does not give credit to himself for the blessings he has received from God. He does not credit his own intelligence, resourcefulness or hard work, if that is what helps him, but he knows that even these things, his intelligence, his job, his opportunities, his very life are also gifts from God. So he gives credit to the one to whom credit is due.

Third, the truly thankful person will be zealous in his thankfulness. Note that the man came and he fell down on his face and gave thanks to the Lord Jesus. And the syntax of the Greek text further shows the man’s zeal and passion to give thanks, because these expressions are all emphatic in the Greek. In other words, this is not some half-hearted or off-hand expression of thanks. This isn’t some simple nod towards God, “Oh yeah, by the way, thanks God. You da Man.” It’s not something blase that says afterwards, “OK, I’ve done by duty.” No, this is a profound and sincerely fervent expression of gratitude. It is truly and deeply heartfelt thankfulness.

Fourth, now get this, the thankful person expresses thanksgiving because of saving faith. The thankful person expresses thanksgiving

because of saving faith.

What is the proper understanding of the Lord's blessing on the former leper in verse 19 and why?

The last phrase of verse 19 translated, "Your faith has made you well" literally reads "Your faith has saved you" in the original language. The words here translate σωζω (sozo) which means to save, to keep safe and sound, to rescue from danger or destruction, to make well, to heal or to restore to health. It's a very versatile word. The question is, how do we know that it refers to spiritual salvation here rather than simply being made physically well, to spiritual salvation rather than simply physical healing?

Two reasons: 1) this man is portrayed by the Scripture as different from all of the other lepers and is singled out for special recognition and blessing, recognition which the others did not receive. They were all physically healed, but this man got something far beyond that; and, 2) the original verb tense of the word is in the perfect active indicative. What that means in the Greek language is that this is a past completed action, which has ongoing **permanent** effects. Do you get that? A past completed action with ongoing permanent effects. So there is really no way that sozo here is simply talking about physical health. Jesus is talking about this man's soul, spiritual salvation.

Now I want you to understand, beloved, that a continual failure in the area of thanksgiving displays a meanness of soul indicative of one that has never come to know God personally (e.g. 2 Tim. 3:2).

Do you find in yourself a heart of thanksgiving or a heart of grumbling and complaining? What should a person do, if the latter is true of him or her?

God expects us to give thanks and 1 John tells us that anyone who habitually continues in a sinful practice does not know God, has not been born of God and is not saved. Therefore, if a person is habitually unthankful to God, then that person has never come to know Him personally. The unthankful person, then, should examine himself as to whether or not he is truly in the faith. As 2 Corinthians 13:5 says, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves."

For those who know God, love and thanksgiving will naturally flow out of their hearts in joyful worship, adoration and giving glory to Him. Their faith will be displayed by thanksgiving .

In His play *King Lear*, William Shakespeare wrote this, "How sharper than a serpent's tooth is to have a thankless child."

Let us not be thankless toward the Lord Jesus Christ who has done us so

much good and loved us so much.

### **Friday**

1 Thess. 5:18 gives us a tremendous challenge, “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

But the challenge of Eph. 5:20 is even greater, “giving thanks always for all things to God the father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...”

So we see that we are not only to give thanks “in” all circumstances, but “for” all circumstances as well.

I want you to spend some extra time today in prayerful thanksgiving to God. Use the space below and just write out all the things that come to you mind, for which you have to be thankful to God. Fall before Him and give Him glory in your heart.