

Luke 17:11-19, Psalm 146

Giving thanks and praise to God for His many and signal blessings has been central to corporate Christian worship since the beginning. In fact, it's fair to say that they almost define orthodox worship. And personally, when we pray over a meal, we express the same ideal of thanksgiving to the Almighty. When we say a prayer before bedtime, we enter into that same spirit. Yet if we pause and put our finger on the pulse of our thoughts, and especially the attitude of our hearts, at times we may find the tender affections and gratitude that we once had toward God dulled by worries or replaced by routine and perfunctory phrases that we casually throw heavenward when our hands are folded in prayer. We may find that the plans and intentions of our lives have become presumptuous of God's kindness and goodness to us, and our attentions largely riveted on our difficulties and a bit of resentment or bitterness creeping in. This is not healthy for us, nor does it reflect the sincerity and purity the Lord desires for us in worship. We find ourselves in need of a fresh word of encouragement and the light of spiritual illumination from the Lord of Life, the good God of all Providence, and the One who has especial love for His blood-bought saints.

Luke 17:11-19 – The healing of the 10 lepers

- V11, Our lesson begins with Jesus passing between two distinct peoples: On one hand, the orthodox and pious Jews, and on the other, the half-breed unorthodox Samaritans.
- V12-13, He encounters 10 men struck with the dreaded Hansen's Disease, caused by the tissue devouring bacterium, *Mycobacterium leprae*. These men, hearing of Jesus passing by, gather at a distance, in accordance with the Law and good sense, in desperation. Crying out of that heart of desperate hope, they beg for mercy from the one they have heard has the power to help them! The title "Master" is used in the 3rd gospel to denote one who has the authority of miraculous power. It is implicit in the text that this group of outcasts includes Israelite lepers and a Samaritan, both having to live separately and desperately and in the shadow of shame outside their respective societies.
- V14, The lepers did not expect what Jesus did in response to their cry for mercy: He did not touch them, nor did he proclaim them healed. Instead, He gave them a command. By the time they reached the priest, they would have experienced the prerequisite healing for presentation. Normally a command to show oneself to a priest followed a cure! (John 5:14, Lev. 13:49; 14:2-3) The priests were purity inspectors.
Only when they, by faith in and obedience to Jesus' word, were they miraculously healed. The lesson here for Jesus' disciples was that Jesus' word was to be trusted and obeyed.
- V15-16, All 10 were healed, in that they had sufficient faith in Jesus to obtain the blessing of obedience. But one of the 10, just one, went beyond the faith needed to obtain the blessing of obedience. This one was moved beyond himself and his heart and thoughts were caught up in praise and thanksgiving to God in the flesh!

And he was a Samaritan, a half-breed and considered an unorthodox dog by his Israelite neighbors. This is not the first time that people “outside the camp” were pointed out as shaming the People of God in the Bible. The book of Jonah is one. The parable of the Good Samaritan is another. There are many other examples.

The main point is the personal, emotional and whole-hearted response of thanksgiving and praise to the Lord for His blessing and kindness and tender mercies!

V17-19, Jesus expresses his surprise and shock at the lack of gratitude by the nine! They believed enough for their own healing, but they failed to join in the joy of the Lord out of thankful hearts. Each had a miracle story to tell, but only one received the intimate and personal blessing of the Lord that comes from a heart of thanksgiving. How different their testimonies to their families and friends. Just one recognized fully Who Jesus was! God in the flesh. And just one enjoyed the joy and approval and conversation of the Savior. What distinguished the 9 from the 1? Recognition, from the heart and with full emotion, of the source of his blessing.

Psalm 146

v1, The anonymous Psalmist urges the congregation (it's plural) to thankfully praise the Lord. Then he urges and insists that he himself (it's singular “oh MY soul!”) praise the Lord!

V2-4, the very essence of being alive is to reside in a relationship of thankfulness to the God from whom all blessings flow! If you're not praising, you're not really living! The author does not put forth God as one who should be praised merely out of obligation (which is true by itself), but his God is much bigger and intimately connected to life, and life eternal at that! He says, “If you stop at perfunctory thanks, you're selling joy short, you're avoiding the center of the good loaf and living off the mere crust on the outside!”

There are temporal, fleeting blessings that come from political alliances and politics. But those fade with mortality. They come and go like the grass in the field as the seasons change.

V5-9, The Lord God Almighty is immortal and is the ultimate cause and source of all that is in the universe and in this good earth! *Give thanks for life and sun and moonlight, and stars and air and food and birds and animals and all that brings life and structure to our world!*

Give thanks for our God who lifts up the oppressed and feeds the hungry and sets free those under the yoke of false imprisonment! Be a partner with Him in these good works! Give thanks for the kindness and mercy of God who gives sight and gives grace to those pushed down by cares and unbearable burdens in their lives. And give thanks for God stumbling the wicked. The goodness of the Lord will reign forever and ever!