

Scripture:
Luke 17:11-19

“Praise giving.”

Today in Luke’s gospel we have a prototypical passage for Thanksgiving Sunday.

An obvious choice for the time of the year we call Thanksgiving --- celebrating all that God has done for us.

In Luke’s gospel today ---- 10 very sick men lay in wait for Jesus as He approaches their town.

And so as Jesus approaches a village between Samaria and Galilee these 10 men lay in wait on the outskirts of town ---- and as He comes forward they approach Him ----- and as verse 13 says --- they called out in a loud voice --- -- “Jesus, Master, have pity on us.”

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And when Jesus sees them He responds --- “Go, show yourselves to the priests.”

“Go show yourselves to the priests.” --- and as they did they were healed.

And as the next verse indicates only one of the ten --- after discovering that he had been healed --- came back --- and praised God in a loud voice --- throwing himself at the feet of Christ and thanking Him.

And Jesus goes on to ask the man ---- “Were not all 10 cleansed? Where are the other 9? ----- Are you the only one who came back --- you the foreigner?”

And then Jesus pronounces the man saved.

“Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

But the man isn't just healed or made well --- as the NIV suggests ----- he's already been cleansed and healed --- the true meaning of Jesus' closing words are --- "Rise and go --- your faith has saved you."

The man has been healed and he has been saved.

He has done as Jesus instructed him to do ---- and was healed ----- and now he has thanked Jesus and praised God ---- and has also been saved as well.

This is a passage many of us likely know well ---- one maybe we've heard as a reminder to be grateful.

10 lepers are healed --- but only 1 of 10 ever returns to Jesus to thank Him.

And so the moral of the story is ----- don't be like the 9 --- don't be ungrateful ---- or forget to thank those that help you.

Instead be thankful ----- and express gratitude to those who help you and reach out to you.

Be like the 1 leper who thanked Jesus --- and not the 9 who never returned after He healed them.

And of course all of this is true --- and helpful advice for life.

It's a faithful --- if not also simple --- but it is a faithful summary of the passage.

But of course there is more here as well.

The 1 who returns first praises God --- before he ever thanks Jesus --- he first praises God.

First it's praise giving ----- and then it's thanksgiving.

In Luke's gospel today it's first praise giving --- and then it's thanksgiving.

The lone healed leper who comes back to Jesus ----- praises God ----- and then he thanks the agent of God who pointed him in the right direction ---- Jesus.

Verses 15 and 16 ---- “One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself back at Jesus’ feet and thanked him...”

This is less a story about thanks giving --- and more a story about praise giving.

All the men are healed.

All ten are healed --- but only one is saved.

His praising God --- and his giving thanks ----- are what save Him.

His realizing that God is good ---- his gratitude ---- is what saves him.

He’s already been healed ---- but turning and praise giving just may be the turning point in his salvation --- the opening up ---- and in breaking of the Kingdom of God.

Maybe it’s just me --- plus a few others I know who find that many of the simple ---- “Thank you’s.” ---- and --- “You’re welcomes.” ----- the basic social niceties that keep the day to day social machinery of life working a little bit more smoothly ---- seem to be fading away a bit.

I may have asked this before ---- but is it just me --- or are these things slipping away from us a bit? ----- simple --- “Thank you’s.” ----- and --- “You’re welcome.”

“He was just doing his job ---- why should I thank him --- that’s what he’s supposed to do --- that’s what he’s here for.”

“I don’t need to thank her --- she just did what I asked her to do in the first place ----- it’s her job isn’t it? ---- she was just doing her job.”

Perhaps ---- sometimes people are just doing their jobs.

But wasn't Jesus just doing His job too.

In cleansing and healing these 10 lepers ---- wasn't Jesus just doing His job.

Well yes ---- but...

Yes He was but.

Often it's the one's doing the thanking that are far more changed and affected than are the one's who are thanked.

We are often the ones changed and affected positively --- and sometimes very powerfully ----- when we take the time to turn and thank others.

And we thank and praise God not because God is vain --- not so much because God is affected --- or needs it --- or benefits from it.

God doesn't really need our lauding and applauding and praising --- yes He wants it.

But He doesn't want it because He is vain --- or self centered.

He wants it because He knows how much we are changed in giving and sharing it.

The man was already healed --- thanks and praise or no thanks and praise --- ---- the man was already healed --- that was a done deal --- the minute he approached Christ and headed for the priests as Jesus instructed him he was healed --- made well.

But in turning and praising and thanking he goes from simply being healed - ----- to being saved.

Giving thanks ---- and praising God --- changes us.

Giving thanks --- and praising God --- opens us up to beautiful and transforming realities of God's grace ---- mercy --- and love in ways that otherwise wouldn't be revealed to us.

And either way ---- thankful or not so thankful ---- the failure to express gratitude sooner or later always ends up coarsening us --- making us just that little bit more self absorbed and coarse.

I don't know if anyone remembers the movie --- "Remains of the day."

It came out in 1993 and starred Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson among others.

It's set in the 1950's and Anthony Hopkins plays ---- Mr. Stevens ---- the proper English butler to a wealthy British family.

And Hopkins tells the story of how in preparation for the role he went and interviewed a real life butler ---- kind of hard to imagine there were still these kinds of butlers in 1993 --- but I guess there were ---- and still are.

Anyhow --- in preparing for the role and speaking with this butler --- the butler described how he understood his role.

And he went on to say that his goal in life as a butler was complete and total obsequiousness.

The skilled ability to blend into the woodwork of a room ----- completely unnoticed --- just like a wall flower or table lamp --- there but hardly noticed at all.

In fact, Anthony Hopkins said one sentence he will never forget is when the real life butler said that you can sum up an excellent butler this way: -----
----- "The room seems emptier when he's in it."

"The room seems emptier when he's in it."

"The goal" ----- the man said ---- "is to do your work --- fill the wine glasses ---- clear the plates and silverware without ever being noticed --- much less thanked."

This may be all well and fine for a proper butler --- but it's also the problem with routine ingratitude ---- it makes people disappear ----- invisible ---- and ultimately empty.

Without any sense of gratitude --- we end up becoming the center of our own universe.

And not only this but eventually --- given enough self centered and invisible experiences ---- others eventually don't even warrant entry into the inner sanctum of our self.

Others begin to disappear --- just as we do ourselves.

Thankfully very often a simple word of thanks makes people visible again.

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A simple word of thanks changes things ----- for the one being thanked --- but even more so for the one thanking.

Should the butler be thanked they suddenly become visible.

Alive ---- instead of just present --- like a lamp or side table --- or plate --- or utensil.

The one who returned to thank Jesus and praise God ---- was suddenly visible and alive again.

He was saved and returned to the state God initially intended for him.

He was a healed body AND he was a saved soul.

Jesus was about a whole lot more than just healing bodies ----- He was also about saving souls.

Turning back --- praising God ---- thanking Jesus changed this man --- and his plight.

What could have been just another healing ----- turned also into a situation of salvation

He ---- the least likely one of all --- a Samaritan ---- transforms this healing narrative into a salvation story as well.

“He threw himself at Jesus feet and thanked him --- and he was a Samaritan.” --- verse 16 says --- the least likely one of all gets it and changes things because of his response and praise.

Jesus wasn't changed ----- God wasn't changed --- the priests weren't changed ---- the man who said thanks and who praised is the one who was changed

Being grateful ---- praiseful ---- changes us.

That's why God so desperately wants us to thank and praise and worship Him ---- because it changes us.

God thinks so highly of us.

God loves us so much that He encourages and even demands of us behaviours and practices that change us.

We get it all mixed up when we think that worship is to the benefit of God.

In worship it's as if God slips one past us ---- get one by us on the sly.

His love for us is so great that He finds ways for us to engage in activities and practices that better us ---- that change us --- that make us better and more faithful and more fun to be around people.

People who truly worship God and find ways to authentically give thanks and praise to God --- are often much easier to be around than those who don't.

An authentic by product of divine worship is the eroding away of narcissism.

That's not the end goal or be all end of all divine thanks giving --- but it is a part of it.

The healed man --- looks out beyond himself after his disease goes away.

He suddenly turns up to God and back to Jesus ---- things are different now.

The other 9 --- carry on their way --- healed but not truly changed at all.

Why do you think it is that so often just after Jesus healed someone He said something like --- “Go home and tell no one of this?”

Why did he so often tell people to be quiet about their healing?

For the simple reason He didn't just come to heal ---- He came also to save -
-- and change hearts --- and change attitudes.

This story paints the picture of 1 in 10 ---- 10% of those Jesus healed also getting saved.

Yes Jesus came to heal diseases and infirmaries but truly He came to save.

And praise and thanksgiving --- faith --- a response to the great love and compassionate care of God in Christ saves.

Remember in John's gospel we are told belief --- a response to the Christ --- saves.

For God so loved the world that He gave His Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish.

Jesus chooses us just as He chose the lepers today.

But it is in his praise giving that the leper truly experiences the full beauty of God's love ----- salvation in an eternal way --- and not just rescuing or healing from his temporal skin disease.

Healing is good ----- salvation is magnificent.

Thanks good --- praise is magnificent.

Praise giving!

How about this thanksgiving we make it all about praise giving.

Instead of just thanksgiving ---- let's get a little bit more radical --- and let's celebrate praise giving.

May today --- and this long week end ---- what's left of it ----- be all about praise giving.

Happy Thanksgiving ----- Happy praise giving!

Amen.