



The Man who said “Thank You”

Luke 17: 11-19

Two men were walking through a field one day when they spotted an enraged bull. Instantly they darted toward the nearest fence. The storming bull followed in hot pursuit, and it was soon apparent they wouldn't make it. Terrified, the one shouted to the other, "Put up a prayer, John. We're in for it!" John answered, "I can't. I've never made a prayer in my life." "But you must!" implored his companion. "The bull is catching up to us." "All right," panted John, "I'll say the only prayer I know, the one my father used to repeat at the table: 'O Lord, for what we are about to receive, make us truly thankful.'"

The thing that hits us about the passage we read this morning is that ten lepers were healed – but only one said “Thank You”.

Gratitude is something we value highly, don't we? Getting children to say thank you – saying the magic word - but we're adults and we know better - don't we?

The trouble is that we often don't practice what we preach. We just never show we are grateful when maybe someone has put themselves out for us.

The author Mark Twain once said that you get more gratitude out of a dog than you would many people. Feed the dog and he's your friend for life. Not so human beings!

The lepers in our story this morning had much to be grateful for. Theirs was a sad story. As lepers, they were outcasts, not allowed to live with others in society. They had to live outside the towns and villages. They lived along the border between Galilee and Samaria. Jews hated Samaritans. Just as they would not tolerate lepers living in their midst, neither did they like Samaritans being near. I might add, that in Samaria, the feeling was rather mutual. So here were ten lepers, nine Jews and a Samaritan, living on the border, neither part of one community or the other. They were non-people, reliant on scraps people gave them.

And Jesus was passing by. They had to shout to be heard. They all knew the stories about Jesus being able to heal. It was worth a try to ask Him – beg Him - to heal them. What did healing mean to them?

- a whole new life
- chance to be part of society again

And in His grace He responded. What happened next is a genuine act of faith on the part of the ten men. Jesus said go and see the priest. They knew what that meant - the priest was the only one to declare someone with leprosy clean - it was incurable so it was miraculous. To their credit, they went forward in faith to the priest. It was only as they were going along that they realized they had been healed - fantastic!

Can you imagine how they felt. They must have danced along. They must have gone to the priest, then as good Jews made a sacrifice. They were clean. Back in society, their lives restored.

Except one. He didn't go to the priest - Luke records him as never going. He is not even recorded as going to his Samaritan counterpart. How irreligious - well what do you expect from a Samaritan - a foreigner - you might think the Jews would have said.

Unlike all his religious, favoured, Jewish counterparts, this man realised that it was Jesus who had healed him - why bother about the priests, the religion and all of that - they hadn't healed him, Jesus did! And he fell at Jesus' feet and thanked Him.

Just a minute. The nine Jews did go to the priest, they had entered into the same blessing through faith - yet they went through the religious stuff without ever recognizing who had healed them. They must have partied afterwards - but they never thanked Jesus. They had not thought of Jesus - only themselves.

But what of the Samaritan who said thank you? " *19 Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."* The AV puts it better and more accurately. *Your faith has made you whole.* The ten lepers were cleansed - but only one was made whole. Nine lepers received cleansing from their disease, but only one man found real healing because he saw Jesus in it.

Martin's story about people being healed.

What about you this morning? Maybe you're interested in the Christian faith because your friends have invited you. Perhaps you've been coming along for a while because you've found friendship and a real welcome here. You may even have seen answers to prayer in your life. But you've never had an encounter with Jesus and you know there's something missing in your life and you want to be whole.

That's the exciting thing. When it comes down to it, what God wants you to experience is a living encounter with the risen Lord Jesus Christ. He wants you to be whole. He wants you to know that He loves you and sent Jesus to die for you so that you could be free from the things that keep you from God. The Bible calls these sins - what you say, what you think and what you do which you know are wrong and keep you from God. Rom 5:9 *God shows his love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

It's because God showed His love for us, that we can find wholeness, new life, eternal life. And all we need to do is accept it and say "Thank you" and follow Him. "Thank you Father that you love me." Thank you Jesus that you've died for me. Forgive me for my sins, come into my life. Make me the person you designed me to be". In a few moments I'm going to give you the opportunity to do just that.

I think I would be safe in saying that the majority of us have already done that this morning. But this passage is just as relevant for us. I've already said that we live in a generation that does not say "thank you". Even worse, we live in a society that takes a high standard of living for granted and all the services and nice things that modern Britain brings. And who do we have to thank for it as believers? It's our God And God has placed us here. How often do we say "thank you"?

You pray I'm sure. We see answered prayer. How often you you show your gratitude? How often is thanks an praise a characteristic of our own lives or our church prayer meetings?

The leper made whole threw Himself at Jesus' feet. It was a mark of worship.

We give thanks because He's made us His people. God hasn't just forgiven us and that's that. He's made us special - His people, His children. We have an eternal assurance. Wow! That's what being whole means to you and I as His people.

Do you feel blessed this morning? Praise God if you do 'cos you are! And how do we say "Thank You"? By living lives that honour Him: *Col 2:6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

Perhaps you are finding that difficult right now. Maybe though, you're having a hard time as a Christian and you feel that you don't have much to be thankful about. Then stop and start to reflect on your life. We're going to sing an old hymn to finish this morning.

*WHEN upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.*

*Count your blessings, name them one by one;
Count your blessings, see what God has done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one;
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done!*

It will you know. You won't be surprised, you'll be shocked! You'll be amazed what God has done! When you've finished the service this morning and you go and have a tea or coffee, why not encourage someone else by telling them about something God has blessed you with. And give Him praise.

Maybe you're bubbling over with thanks for what God has done or is doing - then encourage one another with it.

Perhaps this morning you've realised that like the nine lepers, you have taken God for granted - now is a good time to put that right. God doesn't challenge us to make us feel bad, but to realise that in Him is forgiveness and an opportunity put things right with Him.

Maybe you need Jesus and to say "thank you" for the first time.

Let's pray