

Jesus Blesses A Thankful Man

Luke 17:11-19

Key Verse: 17:16

“He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him--and he was a Samaritan.”

In this passage Jesus heals ten men with leprosy. It is a great miracle, like many others Jesus did. However, the focus shifts from the healing to the responses of those who were healed. Among ten who were healed, only one praised God and thanked Jesus. Jesus blessed him. If we want to be blessed by Jesus, we should learn from him. At this time, after God’s mighty work among us, let’s praise and thank God, so that we may bear God’s blessings.

First, Jesus heals ten men with leprosy (11-14).

In verse 11, Luke reminds us that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. There, crucifixion awaited. Jesus knew this and repeatedly foretold to his disciples that he would suffer, die and rise again. But no one understood what he was talking about. Jesus was walking a lonely way in obedience to God’s will. At such times, even the best of people become too burdened to care for others. Let’s see what Jesus did.

Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. At that time, Jews despised Samaritans because they deviated from biblical, God-centered worship. This offended the Samaritans, who, in turn, resented the Jews. So they did not associate with each other. Jesus had broken through this prejudice when he evangelized a Samaritan woman (Jn 4). Still, when Jesus set out for Jerusalem, a Samaritan village rejected him (9:51 ff.). Jesus, who was fully human and fully Jewish, could have taken offense. James and John did. They wanted to call fire down from heaven to destroy the Samaritan village. But Jesus was different. Jesus had a plan to spread the gospel throughout Samaria (Ac 1:8). The gospel obliterates human barriers, for it is universal good news: all have sinned, and are justified freely by God's grace (Ro 3:23, 24). Jesus went to Jerusalem to liberate men from sinful prejudices so that we might love one another, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, social status, political affiliation, or educational background.

As Jesus entered a village, ten men with leprosy met him. Both Jews and Samaritans were among them. Yet, these lepers traveled together and sought help together. To them, the barriers between Jew and Samaritan were irrelevant. They

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were despised by both, for they carried a contagious, disfiguring and fatal disease. Lepers were not allowed among healthy people, but stayed in quarantines. Lepers could associate only with other lepers. They were isolated and lonely. They remained anonymous even among themselves. In the movie, “Ben-Hur,” a leper in quarantine is asked where to find another leper. He says, “We don't have names here.” These lepers seemed condemned to a hopeless existence.

However, one day, these men heard that Jesus had compassion on men with leprosy and the power to heal them. Jesus was coming through their territory. It might have been impossible for them to leave the territory. Yet in God's providence, Jesus came to them. With a new hope, they banded together and went to Jesus. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, **“Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”** They came to Jesus just as they were and pleaded for mercy. Perhaps they rehearsed this and cried out in unison. In any case, their cry revealed desperate need and faith in Jesus. This cry came from their souls. This cry came from their hope, only in Jesus.

Jesus did not ignore their cry. Jesus did not pass them by. Jesus was willing to help. In the midst of his own painful and lonely struggle, Jesus had compassion on these ten helpless men. Jesus' compassion never dries up or runs out, for Jesus is God. God's compassion is infinite; it is vaster than the ocean and higher than the mountains. God revealed his divine compassion to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7b as follows: **“And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.’”** Jesus is always ready to show compassion to helpless sinners in our time of need.

However, Jesus' way of helping these men suggested that he had a greater purpose in mind than just healing them out of his compassion. Look at verse 14a. **“When he saw them, he said, ‘Go, show yourselves to the priests.’”** Jesus did not simply say, “Be clean!” He told them to go and show themselves to the priests. According to the law, people with skin diseases had to be examined by the priest, and if found clean, could be pronounced fit for community life among God's people. Jesus' words challenged the men to believe that they were healed before it happened and to act in obedience to Jesus' words. Jesus was teaching them to live by faith and to obey the word of God by faith. Jesus wanted to restore their relationships with God and others, and to enable them to live meaningful, fruitful lives.

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Verse 14b says, **“And as they went, they were cleansed.”** Jesus’ word has awesome power in it. In fact, it is the very word of God who created the heavens and the earth. Sensing his spiritual authority, the men obeyed him at once by turning to leave. Miraculously, their leprosy was healed. Their flesh was restored; they were clean and vibrant young men. In an instant they all became as handsome and healthy as Tim McEathron.

In the Bible, leprosy is like the power of sin. As leprosy ruins one’s body, sin utterly ruins one’s life by making him sick unto death spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually. There is no human cure for sin. Only Jesus can save us from sin and heal us from its consequences. 1 John 1:9 says, **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”** Jesus can cleanse any sinner completely and give him a new life. I was once so sick with selfishness that I damaged others without any twinge of conscience. But when I cried out for mercy, Jesus forgave me and cleansed me by his blood and helped me grow as a sacrificial shepherd. David Hull was also like a selfish tax collector. But Jesus healed him and raised him as a man of God. Many among us have been healed by Jesus. Those who are in Christ Jesus know how Jesus has healed them. Can you tell of Jesus’ healing in your life? Do you need healing from pride, selfishness, laziness, lust or any other sinsickness? Let’s come to Jesus, our compassionate Healer.

Why does Jesus heal us? Jesus heals us so that we may obey the word of God and become useful to God. Luke 1:74,75 says, **“...to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.”** In Jesus, we can live the most joyful, fruitful, and happy life. We can serve God all our days and then enter into everlasting glory. What a wonderful Savior Jesus is!

Second, one came back praising God and thanking Jesus (15-16).

How did the men respond to Jesus’ healing? Look at verse 15. **“One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice.”** It is significant that this man praised God as his first response. The man saw God through Jesus. He knew that his healing had come from God. He sensed that the great God of the universe knew his sufferings as a leper, and was concerned for him. He felt that God loved him very personally. When he realized God’s love for him, waves of praise and thanks began to burst forth from his heart. He had no

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regard for what people thought. He was overwhelmed by God's presence and praised God with all his strength in a loud voice: **"Praise God!"** He rejoiced in his healing; but he rejoiced even more in God's presence. We should acknowledge God's presence. Through our summer Bible conference, we experienced God's work through conference speakers, missionaries, and testimony sharers of various kinds. We received the grace of forgiveness, healing, new vision and clear spiritual direction. Ultimately, it was God, who is unseen--who is Spirit--who worked among us. God's Spirit filled the speakers. God's Spirit touched attendant's hearts. God's Spirit ministered his spiritual blessings to us. So we must first praise God for his work.

The healed man did not stop with praising God. He also thanked Jesus. Look at verse 16. **"He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him--and he was a Samaritan."** He first threw himself at Jesus' feet. He was offering himself to Jesus. At that moment, he wanted to give everything to Jesus. He recognized that his new life was not just his; his life belonged to Jesus. When he threw himself at Jesus' feet, he was ready to obey Jesus no matter what Jesus said. If Jesus told him to go to Afghanistan as a missionary, he would go, trusting Jesus' power and love to guide him. In a spirit of surrender, he said again and again, "Thank you! Thank you, Jesus!" This thanksgiving was not superficial, like the automatic "Thank you" on electronic signs. His words of thanks expressed an offering of his life to Jesus. He teaches us how to praise God and thank Jesus.

Dr. Jim R received the grace of Jesus to forgive his sins and call him as a servant of God. In response, he has offered his life back to Jesus. As a professor shepherd at WIU, he cares for his students and prays for them. He has worship service in his home every week, and delivers well-prepared Bible messages. His great labor of love for a handful of needy students may be hard for some to understand. Even his son Joey once asked, "Dad, why do only needy people come to our house church?" Dr. Jim said, "They are the ones God loves, and he wants us to love them, too." Dr. Jim's service in Christ extends beyond the WIU campus to Omaha, St. Louis, Kansas City, and throughout the United States. It extends to Russia and around the world. In fact, Dr. Jim pours out his life to express his thanks to Jesus.

Jesus was pleased with the thankful leper. Look at verse 19. **"Then he said to him, 'Rise and go; your faith has made you well.'"** Jesus accepted his reverent submission and became his Lord. Then, the Lord Jesus told him to rise and go, as a medieval lord would commission knights for royal service. Jesus

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recognized him as a man of faith and credited his faith for his healing. It meant he was right with God. Now he could go forth as a man with dignity, recognized by the king, healthy and fit to serve in God's world. His future was promising; he could be a truly great man and blessing to the world. Here we learn the secret to bearing God's blessings. It is to praise and thank God.

Third, "Where are the other nine?" (17-18).

The man's praise and thanks to God was like a light shining in the darkness. As much as it pleased Jesus, it also exposed the fault of the other nine. They, too, were cleansed by Jesus. But they did not return to praise God and thank Jesus. This was a tragic mistake. Romans 1:21 says, **"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."** Those who fail to praise and thank God become dark and foolish. Eventually they fall into idolatry and become slaves of sin. This is why Jesus told another man whom he had healed after 38 years of paralysis, **"Stop sinning, or something worse may happen to you"** (Jn 5:14). We must learn to praise and thank God for his blessings. In fact, we should praise and thank God always. So St. Paul wrote, **"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"** (1 Th 5:16-18). Even in difficult circumstances, we have many reasons to thank God. God is our Creator who gave us our very lives. God is our Provider who sustains us with all necessary things each day, including food and water and air. God is our Redeemer who gave his one and only Son Jesus Christ as a ransom sacrifice for our sins. He saved us from eternal condemnation. God pours out his blessings on us every day in many ways that we are not even aware of. God is worthy of all our praise and thanks. Let's praise and thank God with all our hearts and lives.

However, when we want to praise and thank God, we find that it is not always easy. Our sneaky sinful nature binds us in self-centeredness and ingratitude. It blinds our minds and freezes our hearts so that we cannot thank God. This is manifest in several ways. Sinful people usually see what they do not have--and feel sorry about that--instead of seeing what they have, and giving thanks. Sinful people usually remember one wrong done by others, while ignoring the many good things done for them by God and others. Moreover, life in this world can be hard. Sometimes we feel too tired or worn out to be thankful. Sometimes it just seems inconvenient to give thanks to God. There are many exciting and interesting things to do first. But in the course of pursuing them, we can miss the chance to thank

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God. To express our thanksgiving to God we must struggle against our sinful nature, fighting a spiritual battle in prayer.

Through our regional summer Bible conference last weekend, God did many wonderful things for us. For example, Joshua Jeon proclaimed the kingdom of God like a divine herald, overcoming his natural way of speaking. Darren Gruett expounded God's vision to Isaiah with prophetic hope for America. American missionaries shared God's mighty work through them and revealed missionary vision. In answer to a call, about 250 people came forward to obey God's will in missions. We could see with our eyes that God is answering our prayers to send missionaries from America. There were also countless blessings that God poured out upon us personally. It is important for us to bear all of God's blessings by giving praise and thanks to God.

However, I confess that this has not been easy for me. The several months of hard labor and stress to carry out the conference left me exhausted. I was vulnerable to feelings of emptiness after a big event and temptations to pride and complacency. I faced coworking problems and communication problems and had to bear complaints of various kinds. In a corner of my heart, grumpiness was dwelling. Frankly, I was helpless to praise and thank God even though I wanted to do so. However, through preparing this message, the word of God moved my heart. My grumpiness vanished and I could praise God and thank Jesus. Praise God! Thank you, Jesus! In this way God enabled me to bear God's blessings and to go forth to serve him joyfully. Perhaps we all struggle spiritually to praise and thank God. May this story of the thankful leper inspire us to praise and thank God. May Jesus' words be with us all as we leave today, **"Rise and go. Your faith has made you well."** Let's go forth to serve him joyfully.