

“Faith: As We Go”

Scripture: Luke 17:11-19

Graphic: thank you,

Key Verses: 14 When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean.

Theme: Gratitude is an expression of faith that comes after we allow God to work through us, acknowledge that He has and will, and give thanks (salvation). Only then can we grow in grace and be used for His purposes (sanctification).

1) Introduction

- a) Some people might say that saying “Thank you” is a thing of the past. Like it’s passé. People just don’t say thank you anymore. We don’t demand it in our schools anymore, we don’t require it in public really, and there are times when we don’t insist on it at home.
- b) You know, and I’m guilty. I’m guilty of not saying thank you as often as I should, especially when someone has done something great in my life, like my wife.
- c) And it’s a sad thing because a Thank You is part of a larger process of allowing someone to do something positive for us. It includes acknowledging that they did it, and giving them affirmation and praise for it.
- d) And once we get in that habit of saying thank you, then we’re looking for the next opportunity to either do something for someone else, or identify something else that someone has done for us.
- e) And the cycle continues...and this process builds marriages and builds relationships and build trust and faith...
- f) But like any cycle, it can break down at any point. And when one part of the cycle fails, the whole cycle fails...
- g) And today, we’re going to look at the role gratitude plays in our faith life and in our walk with Jesus...
- h) Because, as we’ll see, it’s one thing to give thanks to each other, but giving thanks to God leads us into deeper levels of **WORSHIP**, and **MISSION**, and **DISCIPLESHIP**, which are the main expressions of our faith in Jesus Christ...and when that cycle is healthy, we grow in grace and love and faith.

- i) And if you'll remember last week, our faith, even if it's small, is what allows God to work through us for His glory.
- j) But when the cycle of gratitude breaks down, we become selfish and it's "me, me, me" and we lose sight of the God who provides and offers wholeness and healing...because we're walking away from God rather than toward Him...
- k) Turn with me in your Bibles to Luke chapter 17...and we'll be spending a significant amount of time in the book of Luke for the next 6-7 weeks, talking about aspect of faith in the life of a believer...
- l) Pray...

2) Scripture

a) Read verses 17:11-13

- i) Let me stop there, because we have to unpack this a little...
- ii) First thing we notice is that Jesus is TRAVELING to Jerusalem. He's traveling TO Jerusalem. He's traveling to JERUSALEM. This is it! By the time we get to this point in the Book of Luke, Jesus is on his way to the last weeks of his life on earth. He's traveling TO JERUSALEM. Luke wants us to know that this is significant...
- iii) Secondly, in order to get to Jerusalem, he's got to go through the region that lies between Samaria and Galilee. If you've ever driven across the southern tier on NY on Route 86, you know that there's one little section of the highway that crosses over into Pennsylvania for about a mile and then goes back into NY. Last time I did that, I whipped out my iPhone and just put it up to my ear for that time...just 'cause I could without getting pulled over in PA.
- iv) I was wondering if NY bikers would take off their helmets for that stretch of road just because there's no helmet law in PA.
- v) The point is, these two regions were side-by-side and there were certain things that made them very different. The main one is that in Galilee, the population was Jewish. In Samaria, the population was Samaritan. And the Jews hated the Samaritans because they were half-breeds...they were Jews that inter-married and diluted the Law.

- vi) And so Jesus was following the route that took him near Samaria and on the border of Galilee.
- vii) And AS HE ENTERED A VILLAGE...as he approached a village, not yet there, ten lepers approached Jesus.
- viii) Now this term for lepers, or men with leprosy, is a pretty vague term. It might be similar to our use of the term rash or skin condition. It certainly INCLUDED leprosy, where the skin literally falls off, but it also could be a number of skin conditions.
- ix) Either way, people with these conditions were required to stay outside the village...they were outcasts...they were unclean. Anyone who came in CONTACT with them was also UNCLEAN. And the lepers KNEW this and kept their distance when they saw Jesus coming.
- x) They obviously had some level of respect for Jesus...maybe heard about him or potentially had even seen him perform miracles in the past...
- xi) They cried out (loudly, right, because they weren't right next to him), "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"
- xii) Now remember, this idea of mercy is withholding or taking away that which we rightly deserve. They wanted relief from their condition – some of them contagious.
- xiii) How many times have any of us been sick or afflicted or suffering from some ailment and all we want is to feel better? I'll admit, I'm a TERRIBLE sick person...ask my family. Miserable! Give me the soup and the blanket and the remote and LEAVE ME ALONE...I just want to get better. It's all about me...
- xiv) So these men...doesn't mention any women...they probably wouldn't complain anyway, right guys?
- xv) These men...calling out to Jesus...HEAL US!
- xvi) Here's where the cycle of gratitude comes in. Stage one...seeing Jesus and having some faith (even as small as a mustard seed) that Jesus can do something in your life.
- xvii) For these men, it was seeing Jesus coming, having heard something about him, and now moving toward him to get something from him.

- xviii) We do this all the time...I'm hurting, Lord. Help me. I'm broken, God. Put me back together. I'm sick, Jesus. Heal me. I'm a sinner, Jesus. Forgive me.
- xix) It's kind of a selfish motivation to engage Jesus in getting something we want. I'm not saying it's wrong or that he doesn't want us to do it, I'm just sayin'...
- xx) It's the first stage in the cycle. And it happens sometimes before we become Christians...it happens when we are new believers...and it happens after we've walked with the Lord for a while...
- xxi) We focus on OUR needs and what Jesus can do for us...
- xxii) And Jesus knows that about us...and he responds...
- xxiii) Look at verse 14.

b) Read verse 17:14

- i) Jesus SAW them...underline that word in your Bible. Because when Luke writes that Jesus SAW them...it's not just that Jesus' eyes were physically looking at them...but that Jesus understood what the problem was. We can look at pictures of people suffering in Haiti and Africa, but until we stop to think about the implications of that suffering on health, relationships, families, whatever, we don't SEE it. Seeing is about engaging, and Jesus engages with these lepers.
- ii) And because he gets it...he tells them to GO! SHOW yourselves to the priests.
- iii) And we're thinking, huh? Jesus usually has a pretty big beef with the religious establishment of the day, and now he's telling these guys to go to them...
- iv) Well, yes. Here's why...anyone who was determined to be unclean, either physically or religiously was determined to be that way by the high priests. And if the priest says your unclean...you're unclean.
- v) And the only people that could determine that an unclean person was clean, were the priests.

- vi) And so these men, who had been labeled as UNCLEAN by the priests, now were being asked by Jesus to go and present themselves to the priest... WITH THE IMPLICATION that they would maybe be deemed CLEAN...
- vii) And in this culture, being labeled CLEAN was as important, maybe even more important than being part of the society.
- viii) So they went...
- ix) And, here's the cool part, AS THEY WENT...they were made clean.
- x) Because the Priests said so? No. Because they did something to cleansed themselves? No. Because they obeyed JESUS and He made them clean!
- xi) Ten men...all made clean...all because Jesus understood their need, they obeyed Jesus, and gave them what they probably didn't really deserve.
- xii) And I imagine they were all stunned and amazed at what had happened to them. What luck! What good fortune! We're blessed! We must have done something right!
- xiii) Stage two in our gratitude cycle is acknowledging that God can, does, has, and will work in our lives...sometimes without us knowing it, and most times when we open ourselves to it.
- xiv) It's seeing what God has done and giving the credit to God.
- xv) I prayed before this big test in Biology and God helped me recall the answers I had studied.
- xvi) I prayed for healing and the doctors were amazed.
- xvii) I prayed for patience and god gave me kids.
- xviii) The second part of this cycle is coming to terms with the source of the blessings and answered prayers...the author of mercy and grace...acknowledging that God did this.
- xix) And to be honest, most people don't have a problem with stage one and stage two. Getting Jesus' attention...seeing Jesus coming...even acknowledging that Jesus has done an amazing thing in your life...this is pretty common...

xx) For many, though, this is where the cycle breaks down...

c) Read verses 17:15-16

- i) Ten men...TEN LEPERS, made clean by God's power, because Jesus understood their physical need, and only ONE turned back. Only ONE.
- ii) When he SAW...he responded. It's not just that he was healed...but, again, he SAW – he understood – what it meant...
- iii) And he turned back for the single purpose of praising God and thanking Jesus for what had happened to him.
- iv) **Stage three** in our gratitude cycle is giving gratitude to God for the healing...giving praise to God for the provision.
- v) He turned back and praised God IN A LOUD VOICE. He wanted people to know that it was JESUS who did this and he wanted Jesus to know that he was deeply thankful.
- vi) And this is where we so often fail...we come to church, we read our Bibles, we pray and ask God for healing and wholeness...we go to Sunday school and small groups and wrestle with the theology...and God answers prayers and provides when we fall short and covers our sin...we accept the gift of salvation and restoration...and then so often WE QUIT because we're content.
- vii) We even tell people what God has done in our lives and yet we fail to fall on our knees in gratitude to the giver of the gift.
- viii) I'm in awe of the people in my life and in this church that are always reminding us to give thanks to God...to move to that third stage...to go back time and time again in prayer and praise to God...it's humbling.
- ix) And to top it all off...for Luke to really make his point about salvation and redemption available for all people...he writes, "And he was a Samaritan."
- x) Not only is this guy the only one that turned back to thank Jesus, but he's not even a respected, pious member of the community. And it's the least among us that sometimes teach is the greatest lessons of the faith.
- xi) I'm thankful to my brothers and sisters who teach me that regularly...

xii) And Jesus goes on, now to speak these words of truth and wisdom...

d) Read verses 17:17-19

i) Ten men...nine went on their way...cleansed and happy to be relieved of their malady...nine men, finding happiness in being healed...

ii) But only one man finding true joy in salvation.

iii) Psalm 51:10-12 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. 12 **Restore** to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

iv) The one former leper that came back to throw himself in praise and thanksgiving at the feet of Jesus was the one that received eternally more than the other nine who kept right on going. Not only was he healed of the physical skin condition that plagued him from his past, but he was made whole by the eternal salvation that is offered to all, through accepting Jesus as our personal savior.

v) In the end, they all went **on their way**...but only this one *foreigner* got to the final stage of our cycle, which is greater faith to allow God to bring glory to His name through him.

3) Application

a) There are lots of people who receive God's temporal blessings and then go on their way without giving praise to Christ for it.

b) Jesus sees them, they come to Jesus because they have a need – something bad has happened in their lives, some boulder has dropped on their life. Jesus begin to work in them to draw them to him...maybe it's a physical healing, maybe an emotional struggle or a relational issue.

c) But then, when they are healed or begin to experience freedom, even though they know that God is the one who orchestrated it, they **FORGET**, or **COULDN'T CARE LESS**, or **DIDN'T STOP TO THINK** that Jesus was trying to invite them into relationship with God.

d) And so they walk their own path, knowing that Jesus did that in their life, but never giving him the praise and glory.

- e) And the way this gratitude cycle works is you initially – almost selfishly – come to Christ for healing. You ALLOW God to come and ALLOW God to work. And he does it and you ACKNOWLEDGE it and live with a sense that there is a God and He cares for you. And that causes you to respond with a deep sense of gratitude and thanks...and you express that in worship and praise as you ACCLAIM God and ADORE God. And that takes you full circle back to a place where God is deepening your faith and you ALLOW God to work more and more...
- f) But if at any time, that cycle gets broken...after the encounter with Jesus, you fail to ask for healing and wholeness. After the healing, you walk away...and never praise God, then there's a barrier to getting to growing in faith and God can't give you more...

4) Conclusion

- a) Maybe today there are places in your life that you know you haven't given God praise and thanks for something that He's done.
- b) Or maybe it's been a while...
- c) As followers of Christ, we grow as we go in faith – but that 'going' requires that we come back time after time after time to give thanks.
- d) Not just for the big stuff...and not just for the churchy stuff...but for work, and for family and for playtime and everything in between.
- e) This morning, I invite you to come up front...maybe it's simply to say thank you to Jesus for something that you've experienced today. Maybe it's to thank Jesus for something huge that He's done in your life. Maybe you feel drawn to come not knowing why.
- f) And maybe, you've never given your life to Christ and you want today to be the first time you are acknowledging that you want the healing that He offers. There will be people from our prayer team up here to pray with you if you want. As I pray, I invite you to come and give thanks and be healed!
- g) Let's pray...