

November 24, 2019 -

Luke 17:11-19 -

"Turn Back and Be Thankful"

Introduction

I heard a parody about a Church prayer service. One night, at a Church prayer meeting a Christian Brother related a long, complaining list of experiences about the trials and difficulties that he encountered in his walk with the Lord. He pretty much wore everybody out with his complaining. At the end of his talk, another brother stood up and said, "I know that my brother, who just sat down, lives over on Grumbling Street. I lived there myself for some time, but I never enjoyed good health. The air there is bad, the houses are bad, the water is bad; the birds never came and sang in the street, and I was gloomy and sad enough.

But finally I moved. I moved to Thanksgiving Street, and ever since then I have had good health. The air is pure, the water is good, the sun shines all day, the birds are always singing, and I am happy as I can be. Now, I would suggest to our brother, that he too, move. There are plenty of houses 'to live on Thanksgiving Street. ---

Which street are you living on today, Grumbling Street or Thanksgiving Street? Thanksgiving is not just a national holiday; it is a therapy for our soul and an ointment for our living. Unfortunately, the holiday that may very well help us to put life in its proper perspective is overshadowed and overrun by everything from football games, Parades and early or late Christmas shopping.

Years ago themes of gratitude were common at school, on TV, and in store shop windows, even Pilgrims for those of us who remember who they are. But no longer! Halloween now rivals Christmas in sales and the store shelves just before kids go back to school. And by the time you rip October's page off your calendar the Christmas merchandise has already replaced tricks or treats. Whatever happened to Thanksgiving? The turkey seems to be the last remaining remnant of a National holiday proclaiming thanks to God. Grocery stores bait you to buy as much food as you can so you'll go home with a free bird. The holiday has been vanishing gradually from national awareness and you have to look hard for any public display of real giving God thanks? God deserves better and we all would be the better for it. We can choose to be thankful.

The reasons we may find it hard to give thanks are as many as the troubles that strike us each day. Difficulties don't pause for a Thanksgiving break. There is a way, however, to find reasons to be thankful during even the darkest episodes of life. When the curtain of struggles seems to block out all joy, we can choose to be thankful.

We can go back and be thankful for such things as we have. We can go back and be thankful for the people in our lives that made a difference. We can go back and be thankful unto the God who gave us our being. Luke wrote, " **For in him we live, and move, and have our being;**

---Acts 17:28

In order that the Israelites might understand the importance of being thankful, God initiated three annual feasts as reminders: 1. Passover. 2. The Feast of Weeks & 3. The Feast of Tabernacles. Every one of these reminded God's people of His blessings on them and of their need to express thanksgiving.

I Go Back and Take A Good Look at the Past. Vv. 11-13

a) We all understand and appreciate the importance of gratitude. How it can radically change relationships. In fact, one of the first things we were taught and that we teach our children is to express their gratitude. I don't suppose there is any story in the Bible that is so endearing to us, so timelessly appropriate, as the story of Jesus healing the ten lepers. We have all heard the story many times, like so many Bible stories we don't apply it to the situations of life.

b) The story begins: "*And as he entered a certain village there met him ten lepers, and they stood at a far distance.*" Don't ever think for a moment that death is the worst thing that can happen to a person. It's not. And the scene this morning is a case in point. These ten men walked the earth. They breathed and ate. They had hopes and fears and aspirations and feelings just like you and me. Yet, there was a tragic sense in which they were already dead.

c) Leprosy was the most dreaded of all the ancient diseases. It ate away at the body and left its victim maimed and disfigured. There was no known cure. They had no hope for a family life, a useful occupation or plans for the future-they were dead men walking. Leprosy is a disease of the nervous system, nerves lose their sensitivity- if you can't feel heat- burns, can't feel pain. Eventually fingers and toes fall off. In extreme cases, people lose ears, their nose.

1. Their situation was made worse because leprosy was believed to be highly contagious. Actually, we know today that it is not. But tell that to ancient superstition. In their time, lepers were treated as outcasts. They were kicked out of their community, their homes their jobs. They were left to an existence of begging. They would come together in their own leprosy community, trying to eke out an existence.

2. The scripture makes it quite clear that as these lepers approached Jesus they stood at a far distance. Everywhere these poor men journeyed they heard familiar words yelled out: "Unclean," "Leper." And then some would hurl stones at them to keep them away. Leprosy was a serious public health concern but it was tinged with the religious element of ritual uncleanness. So it was that they not only had to live with their physical handicap, but they were also isolated. They had to live in the misery of loneliness. That can do more to drain a person's energy for living than the most horrible of diseases.

3. You will note that prior to Jesus healing them all (note verse #13) ... **lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.** Note it says they lifted up [their] voices, the word for voice in Greek is the word "*pho-ne*" it is where we get our English word phone. Their voice carried over a distant because Jewish law clearly prescribed that a leper could not get within fifty yards of a clean person.

Application:

If you are saved today you cried that too. These lepers picture our eternal souls before salvation. What was your past life like? I am talking BC. - before Christ in your life. When was the last time you truly thanked God for saving you from your past? A good way to do this and put some action to thanksgiving is-

II Go Back and thank someone from your Past. Vv. 15-17

[15] And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, [16] And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. [17] And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

1. Imagine their excitement when Jesus sent them on the way to the priests. This was a sign of their healing. Priests were the only ones who could pronounce lepers healed. The Bible says in verse 14, that as they went, they were healed. Once declared cleaned by the priest this man some eight days later according to the Levitical law went back, the Greek implies "returned" and found Jesus. The verb "*hū-po-stre'-fō* is intransitive, followed by an infinitive of purpose. The cleansing rite was an eight - day ritual. --- **Lev.14:1-2**

2. How excited these men must have been. Distorted faces and bodies began returning to normal. A warm sensation began creeping into their once dead fingers and toes. They could go back to their families, their communities and their jobs.

3. Sadly, only one cleansed leper return to thank Jesus? Someone once offered the following nine reasons why the nine did not return: One waited to see if the cure was real. One waited to see if it would last. One said he would see Jesus later. One decided that he had never had leprosy. One said he would have gotten well anyway. One gave the glory to the priests. One said, "O well, Jesus didn't really do anything." One said, "Just any rabbi could have done it." One said, "I was already much improved."

Excuses! There are all kinds of excuses. Gratitude can be easily overlooked because of the excitement of a great gift or in the moment of great victory or success. – **II Timothy 3:1-2**

4. We're not very good at saying "Thank you," are we? We're like a little boy I heard about. On his return from a birthday party, his mother said, "Bobby, did you thank the lady for the party?" I was going to but a girl ahead of me said, 'Thank you,' and the lady said don't mention it. So I didn't. We live in a generation where young people have an entitlement mentally and not an attitude of gratitude.

5. This man fell down glorifying God. I believe He knew God was in Jesus. He knew God was the source of his miracle and he thanked Jesus, he thanked Him as well as worshiped Him. He came back with the right attitude. So while the ungrateful nine illustrate the general attitude of the Jews, they are representative of the general attitude toward Jesus. Give us healing, give us food, deliver us from demons, do miracles, but do not expect worship. Do not expect praise, adoration, do not expect thanks. This is the attitude of many ingrates today.

The grateful Samaritan is a picture of the outcast who believed. This man's faith embraced Jesus as God, as Lord. It's a faith that bows humbly in recognition of one's lowliness in His presence. It's a faith that Jesus says saves.

True gratitude comes when we realize where we would be without God's help. Along life's way God often sends us a mentor, a comforter, consular, counselor, an adviser or who knows maybe even an angel. We can show our gratitude by thanking God for providing our needs and we can prove our sincerity by going back and giving thanks to those God sent our way.

#6. When was the last time you went back and thanked someone from your past? You might want to thank a teacher who helped with your math, or reading. . I witnessed this in school many times in a Catholic school. Students came back and thanked their teachers. Go back and be thankful. Go back to that person, Sunday School teacher, pastor, or Youth worker who cared enough to lead you to Christ and express your thanks. - Ms. Mary

Make a habit of getting even with people -- not those you think wronged you, but those you know who helped you.

-- Kay Levin

Conclusion:

Thankfulness is a conscious response that comes from looking beyond our blessings to their source. Thanksgiving is encouraged throughout the entire Bible. It is very important. When we think of all that God has done for us, we are obliged to give thanks to Him.

“In 1637, amid the darkness of the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648), a German pastor, Martin Rinkart, wrote the hymn “Now Thank We All Our God.” In that year because of famine and deadly diseases, Rinkhart is said to have buried 4,480 of his parishioners in one year, that is an average of fifteen a day, among them was his own wife. In the heart of this time of great darkness and sorrow, with the cries of fear outside his window, he sat down and wrote this hymn that was intended as a table grace for his children.