

The Power of Gratitude

Luke 17:11-19

Children's Message

Let's Take a moment just to look at this picture.

Don't say anything.

Just look at it and ask yourself what it is about.

Now tell me your thoughts.

It is about thanksgiving.

This is a painting by Rhoda Nyberg.

It is entitled grace.

It is one of the most reproduced pictures or the last one hundred years.

It didn't start out as a painting though.

This is the original photo taken almost a hundred years ago in 1918 by Rhoda's father, a photographer.

The man in the picture was a salesman who came by his studio. It was during the first world war and terrible times. He wanted his photo to be about how we could still be thankful with the little we had.

One of the most powerful important things you can have in life is thankfulness. I know moms & dads teach us to say thank you but it is something different to really really mean it.

In fact it is one of the most important prayers to learn to pray.

Would you pray it with me?

Think of something you are thankful for and just tell God.

The Power of Gratitude

Luke 17:11-19

¹¹ Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance ¹³ and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

¹⁴ When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

¹⁵ One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

¹⁷ Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" ¹⁸ Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

Happy Thanksgiving

Most of us know the story of thanksgiving which is a tradition from the U.S.A.

It is about the thankfulness the Early European settlers had

as they survived in the new country by God's grace
through the help provided by the native people.

They were indeed thankful to God.

It is for this reason I chose this passage of Scripture to speak on.

Jerusalem

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem.

Ironically named, Jerusalem means "Foundation of Peace"

For Jesus, in the Gospel of Luke,

he makes a deliberate movement towards Jerusalem, his death.

Jerusalem is not a place of peace but of conflict and suffering.

It is in the very eye of the storm of Jerusalem that we can find true peace.

It is not the city, but the death of Jesus and his resurrection

that is the foundation of peace.

Leprosy

Ten lepers, obviously outside the city, call from a distance.

Lepers were completely shunned in that society.

We use the term leper even today to describe outcasts.

But it was terrible for them.

They were already suffering physically and psychologically.

Relationally, they were isolated and abandoned. No family or friends.

Spiritually, they were considered unacceptable to God.

They stood far away from Jesus.

They had to yell. They had to beg for mercy, for pity.

We are asked to identify with the lepers.

We who understand physical pain.

Emotional and psychological pain.

Or relational pain in loneliness.

Broken relationships.

Estrangement.

Isolation, abandonment, despair.

Or even the feeling that God doesn't care.

That he who made us has abandoned us.

Judges us.

Rejected us.

We know guilt, confusion, anger, blame, emptiness.

But these lepers had one thing - desperation and a crazy hope.

That Jesus would hear them and actually care enough to stop.

No one else did.

What did they hope for?

Attention? Money? Healing?

In 2003 I began a slide into depression over 2 years.

I was still fully functional and still pastoring.

But due to circumstances out of my control

I had been abandoned, betrayed, misunderstood by certain people

I felt isolated, guilty, confused.

It took me 15 months to realize that I didn't know why I got up in the morning.

I was angry at God. May be he didn't care either.

And so I cried out to him.

I asked him if he really cared to stop and see me.

Like a leper on the side of a road who had nothing but desperation.

A crazy hope.

He saw and said

Well, Jesus not only heard them.

He saw them.

He spoke to them.

What he says seems strange to us

because he sends them to the temple - the priests.

But what he was communicating was this.

Go and see if God really cares.

Go and see if those who in that day and age could declare you clean.

Discover that you can approach God again.

In October of 2005, six years ago almost to the day,

I went alone to an apartment in whistler for a week to find God.

And I did. I told him how I felt, my frustration, my anger, my pain.

And he heard, me and saw me and spoke to me.

One Samaritan

Although 10 lepers found that God still loved them

only one came back to thank Jesus.

If you want to know the definition of Worship.

Why we gather here every week on Sunday.

What we are actually doing this is the definition in these words.

He came back to Jesus.

He praised God in a loud voice - he sang from deep down in his heart.

He threw himself down at Jesus feet.

He no longer stood afar but close to Jesus.

Jesus was his saviour, his Lord, his King.

That is what we do here every Sunday.

Jesus does a lot of good all around the world in ways we cannot see.

He feeds the poor. He stops tyranny. He rescues the oppressed.

But not everyone comes back to him to praise him, thank him and call him King.

Many people choose to blame him for the things that don't get done instead.

But we know what he has done and it is because we know we tell others.

Your Faith has made you Well

Jesus says something very odd: "Your faith has made you well."

Wasn't the man already well, just like the other 9?

No, this man was made well in a way the other nine were not.

God healed 10, but only one was made well.

Only one came back. Only one made Jesus their King.

Amen.

An Exercise in Gratitude

I didn't get better right away.

It took time.

But one exercise that helped me a great deal

- and I did think it was silly at the start but found it deep and powerful.

Was to make a list of things every day of what I was thankful for.

It started slow, but it grew every day.

Instead I learned to become grateful and content and loved.

I began to see what God did even in little things I didn't see before.

So here it is.

Think of 3 things you are thankful for and write them down.

Share it in a group of 3-5.

Then we'll gather again to share and pray.