

# ***Giving Thanks before Thanksgiving***

(Luke 17:11-19)

## **1. We have much to be thankful for in comparison to other nations.**

We should be grateful for the men and women who have and are fighting to keep us safe and free. We are grateful to God who uses brave men and women to protect us.

On September 13, as workers were digging through the debris of 9/11 terrorist attack, the tenth anniversary of which is next year, searching for survivors some of the workers discovered a 20 foot tall cross beam and immediately recognized it as a symbol of hope. I see the Ground Zero cross as a reminder that Christ's death on the cross is really our only hope as a nation.

## **2. We have much to be thankful for in comparison to other generations.**

Dorothea Lange (May 26, 1895 – October 11, 1965) was an influential American documentary photographer and photojournalist, best known for her Depression-era work. Her best known photograph is Lange's 1936, *Migrant Mother*, who was Florence Owens Thompson (September 1, 1903 – September 16, 1983),

In 1960, Lange spoke about her experience taking the photograph:

*I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet. I do not remember how I explained my presence or my camera to her, but I do remember she asked me no questions. I made five exposures, working closer and closer from the same direction. I did not ask her name or her history. She told me her age, that she was thirty-two. She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold the tires from her car to buy food. There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her, and seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it (From: *Popular Photography*, Feb. 1960).*

Tom Malone talked about being in the Depression but because his family was so poor they never knew they were in the Great Depression. He said his mom made them shirts out of feed sacks and it was nothing to see on the front of his shirt "25 pounds of Self-rising Flour." We should be thankful for our parents and grandparents who sacrificed for us.

## **3. We have much to be thankful for in comparisons to other times in our lives.**

When Becky and I got married we lived in a 12 x 48 mobile home. That is less than 600 square feet. Our trailer had no A/C but plenty of roaches. I like to eat peanut butter but back then we had no choice but to eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. I will always be thankful for Gospel Baptist Church sending us groceries.

Jesus tells us an incident from His ministry where gratitude was both expressed and not expressed in Luke 17:11-19. Jesus heals 10 lepers and the 9 Jewish lepers do not give thanks to Christ. Only one Samaritan leper does.

Jesus' response was, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"

Luke, the only Gentile author of Scripture, wrote his gospel to win the wealthy Gentile, Theophilus, to the Lord (Luke 1:1-4).

Here is how Luke wrote his Gospel tract.

**In Luke 1-2, Luke proves that the Gospel is based on Historical Fact.** For example, Luke documents the birth of Jesus in Luke 2:1-7 and also the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

**In Luke 3-9:50, Luke presents a Gospel that is for all people.** These chapters record Jesus' ministry in Northern, Gentile Galilee where Jesus saved demoniacs, lepers, and paralytics. The marginalized.

**In Luke 9:51-19:27, the Gospel is rejected.** First the Gospel is rejected by Samaritans. This is where our story of the Ten Lepers healed by Jesus is found. These chapters are called the Journey to Jerusalem section. In 9:51 we read that Jesus "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" to die for all outcasts.

**In Luke 19:28-24:53, Luke records the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for all sinners upon His arrival in Jerusalem.**

In this true story in Luke 17:11-19 from Jesus' ministry on the way to Jerusalem we learn two great truths about giving thanks:

## **1. All People Should Give Thanks (Luke 17:11-14)**

All ten lepers were healed but only one gave thanks. That is a 9 to 1 ratio. Not a good ratio but even perhaps a low ratio to reality. Does one in 1 in 9 people give thanks to God? Do you and I give thanks for 1 in 9 blessings from the Lord?

**A. Leprosy is like sin in many ways.** In Isaiah 1:6, God compares sin to leprosy.

1) Leprosy like sin is deeper than the skin. In Leviticus 13 there is the Law of the leper and 13:3 says that leprosy is deeper than the skin. There are still 10 million worldwide who suffer from the horrors of leprosy. Leprosy can actually affect the nerves. This terrible disease can eat off the lepers' noses, ears, hands and fingers. Leprosy eats the palate from the throat so the leper can make only an unearthly gurgling noise. It can attack mucus membrane and cause the eye to drop right out of the socket. Sin likewise affects the total

person and is not a cosmetic problem but a heart problem. Cosmetics or even plastic surgery will not cure the sinner it takes a heart transplant.

2) Leprosy like sin spreads. In Leviticus 13:46, the leper was quarantined and separated from all other people not only because leprosy could be caught from a sneeze but the leper was obnoxious. Because of the skin sores the leper could not bath and therefore was smell of death. The sinner who dies without Christ is eternally separated from God.

**B. Leprosy can be cured and the lepers in Luke 17:11-14 are healed by Jesus.**

1) There is very noticeable difference between the way Jesus reacted to lepers and most people. People rejected lepers. People carried rocks to throw at lepers in order to run them away. Woman and children would scream at the sight of lepers. Since lepers could not work, family members would bring food and money to a third and neutral location for the leprous family members.

2) In striking contrast, Jesus touched and healed lepers as in Luke 5:12-14. Jesus is in Heaven now but Hebrews 4:15 assures us that as our Great High Priest, He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities.

**C. These lepers healed by Jesus, however, did not express gratitude to Jesus for His healing.** They took His gift of healing but then ignored the gracious Giver of the gift.

**D. God blesses all people with what Bible teachers call “Common Grace.”** Jesus said that God rains on the just and the unjust in Matthew 5:45. David praised God in Psalm 103:3 for healing all diseases. The greatest gift from God to all people is the death of Christ for the sins of the world.

**E. Jesus expects gratitude and misses gratitude when it is not expressed.** James 1:17 says, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.” God indiscriminately pours out all these gifts on people and expects gratitude and misses gratitude when it is not expressed. In other words, ingratitude grieves God.

**F. The nine obeyed the rules but only the one worshiped the Lord.** We value work over worship. We judge people for not keeping the rules and the Lord desires His people come and pour out genuine praise for His grace in our lives. If we worship in humility then our work will be even more pleasing to Him.

## **2. The Thankful Should Come to Jesus for Salvation (Luke 17:15-19)**

**A. If ingratitude grieves God, gratitude glorifies God.** This leper felt health return to his body. Perhaps now he could see, hear, smell his own body odor, feel with his restored fingers, talk and even shout. With his new found voice he loudly glorifies God with thanksgiving. The Lord in Psalm 50:23 said, “Whosoever offers praise glorifies Me.”

Gratitude levels the playing field. All of us are not equal in talents and abilities and opportunities but all of us can excel at giving thanks.

**B. The one who came back to Jesus was healed twice.** The first healing was physical and the second was spiritual. In 17:19, Jesus said, “Arise go your way: your faith has made you whole.”

**C. Only Luke records this incident because in it Jesus saves a Samaritan.** This man was an outcast for three reasons. And with all three all of us can identify.

1) He was a leper who was physically dying. Just like all of us.

2) He was a Samaritan who was racially despised by all Jews. God is not racial. Jesus died for the world of all nationalities.

3) He was a stranger or foreigner or one who was religious but lost. All people are religious but lost. Martin Luther said every person is religious by default. Theophilus was a religious pagan so the salvation of the leper who was also stranger must have meant much to him.

Jesus warned others about being religious in Matthew 5:20 “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

**D. When the leprous, pagan Samaritan put his faith in Christ, he was cleansed of all his sins and made whole.** No longer did he have to cry out “Unclean” Unclean” because he was a leper nor because he was an unforgiven sinner.

Conclusion: The ultimate act of gratitude is to trust Jesus as your Savior. The unsaved enjoy God’s gifts of life every day and should come and worship the Giver of every good and perfect gift and shout a giant “Thank You.”