

Gratefulness

Reasons to be Grateful

Luke wrote of one of Jesus' miracles:

¹¹While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; ¹³and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus Master, have mercy on us!" ¹⁴When He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they were going, they were cleansed. ¹⁵ Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, ¹⁶and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine – where are they? ¹⁸Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" ¹⁹And He said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well." (Luke 17:11-19)

This Scripture tells the story of when Jesus healed ten Lepers.

Jesus sent them to the local priests. The priests didn't heal but were designated to pronounce them clean according to the Law of Moses. In the process all were healed but only one returned to say thank you to Jesus who had healed him.

It seems strange that was such a response.

A study of ancient Israel reveals a stubborn, complaining, and ungrateful people.

Even here Jesus is stunned by the contrast of the grateful Samaritan and the other nine, who should have known better.

What are some keys to gratefulness that we can glean from this story?

Our Unworthiness
God's Graciousness
Our Gratefulness

Gratefulness is expressing sincere appreciation to God and to others for the ways that they have benefited my life.

The contrasting opposite is murmuring, or complaining.

Grateful people appreciate what they have;
murmurers don't want what they are given.

An ungrateful spirit is a rebuke to those who are providing for you and a complaint against God.

I. Our Unworthiness

Lepers were outcasts of society. They were untouchable. The elders of Jesus' time believed leprosy to be the result of sin, with an added stigma of being judged by God.

The Law of Moses required isolation for lepers. It stated:

Whenever someone approaches he shall cover his mouth and cry, "Unclean, Unclean!" He shall live alone and his dwelling shall be outside the camp."
(Lev. 13:45-46)

Lepers were considered the lowest of the low in society.

Authority of the day: "If the wind is blowing from a leper to a healthy person the leper was to stand at least 50 yard away."

Apparently one leper, a Samaritan, sensed that he didn't deserve to be healed and knew that he had to thank to the One who healed him.

"True gratefulness springs from an awareness of our total unworthiness and inadequacy before a holy and just God. If we received what we deserved, we would all be destroyed in an eternal hell."¹

The quality of gratefulness.

Eucharistos – "thankful," "mindful of favors; grateful"

The characteristic that blocks gratefulness is 'expectation.'

Expectations of others, based on false assumption of our personal importance, destroy a spirit of gratefulness and instead produce presumption and murmuring.

A beggar has no expectations, and is therefore grateful for anything they receive.

¹ The Power of True Success, (Oak Brook: Institute in Basic Life Principles, 2001), p. 101.

Nothing holds back the heart from gratefulness so much as holding on to expectations.

To the degree our expectations increase, our gratefulness decreases.

According to one historian, Dr. Franklin, the first settlers of New England were going through a time of great despondency and it was proposed in one of their public assemblies to proclaim a fast.

“An old farmer arose, spoke of how they were provoking heaven with their complaints, reviewed their mercies, showed that they had much to be thankful for, and moved that, instead of appointing a day of fasting, they should appoint a day of thanksgiving.”

II. God’s Graciousness

Jeremiah wrote about God’s gracious character,

The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. (Lam. 3:22-23)

Jesus didn’t have to heal anyone, especially a bunch of lepers, but He did. When someone is the recipient of God’s graciousness, and realizes that they were undeserving, then they are filled with grateful praise.

David expressed praise for God’ mercy to him,

“I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me and heard my cry. He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; many will see and fear and will trust in the Lord.” (Ps. 40:1-3)

The Grace: Unmerited Favor

God’ rich blessings on those who are undeserving.

Titus 3:5-7

“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified

by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

“Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; Let those who love Your salvation say continually, the Lord be magnified!” (Ps. 40:16)

The Samaritan leper when he realized he was healed ran back to thank Jesus, giving God glory. He realized that God had done a great work.

When someone has experienced salvation he is given a new song.

III. Our Gratefulness

When Jesus saw the leper returning to thank Him he was surprised,

¹⁷Then Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine – where are they? ¹⁸Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?”

Jews despised Samaritans and would avoid them as much as possible. Jesus pointed out that someone so undeserving was so right!

¹⁹And He said to him, “Stand up and go; your faith has made you well.”

Jesus identifies him as a man of faith. The importance of faith is that of total wellness – salvation.

Gratefulness is the result of our daily experience with Christ.

Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed and overflowing with gratitude.
(Col. 2:6-7)

“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” (Col.3:16-17)

We long to live out a new relationship with God. David was constantly in trouble and turned to the Lord in prayer and arose with confidence that God would be his help in time of need.

“It is good to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to declare Your lovingkindness in the morning and Your faithfulness by night.” (Ps. 92:1-2)

Ps. 100

Ps. 103:1-5

It is God’s will that we become people of praise, overflowing with gratitude. Realizing our spiritual poverty and the grace of God given to us, we will become grateful.

“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thess. 5:16-18)

“The worst moment for an atheist is when he is really thankful and has nobody to thank.”
Dante Gabriel Rossetti

William Shakespeare prayed,
O Lord, that lends me life,
Lend me a heart replete with thankfulness.

Ways to express gratefulness to God:

Sing from your heart; never pass up an opportunity to give audible praise to the Lord. Make it your goal to be an example to children of public praise.

“...be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father...” (Eph. 5:18-20)

Never complain

Have the attitude, “Nothing is too great to ever make me complain.”

Turn each experience into a song of praise.

Bring back singing to this generation.

A city missionary in London was called to an old tenement building where a woman lay dying in the last stages of a terrible disease. The room was cold and she had nowhere to lie but on the floor. When the missionary asked if there was anything he could do, she replied, *"I have all I really need; I have Jesus Christ."*

Deeply moved, the missionary went home and penned these words:

In the heart of London City,
Mid the dwellings of the poor,
These bright and golden words were uttered,
"I have Christ. What want I more?"
Spoken by a lonely woman dying on the garret floor,
Having not one earthly comfort,
"I have Christ. What want I more?"