

Thankfulness: A Rare Commodity

Luke 17:11-19

Introduction:

1. Here in this text, Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem when, all of a sudden, ten lepers cry out to Him for help (read verses 11-13). In Bible days, leprosy was a terrible, incurable disease.
 - It was a chronic, infectious disease characterized by sores, scabs, and white shining spots beneath the skin. The symptoms were so grotesque that the victim would become repulsive to others and would have to live in seclusion.
2. Jesus does have mercy on these ten lepers (vs. 14), but then notice what happens (vs. 15-19). Only one out of the ten returned to give Jesus thanks. What a pitiful shame, yet the percentage isn't much higher today. People haven't changed in 2,000 years.
3. If we could somehow poll the people in this town and see what percentage have thanked God for anything this week, we would probably be shocked.
4. Thankfulness is a rare commodity today because it doesn't come easy to our flesh. It comes much easier to complain, gripe, whine, and wallow in self-pity. It is so easy to become consumed with what we **want** rather than be thankful for what we **have**.
 - Yet what did Paul tell believers in the church in **1 Thessalonians 5:18**?
5. We must be thankful people. According to God's Word, we cannot be in the will of God if we are not thankful. Why is this issue of thankfulness so important? Let's look into this text from God's Word and seek to understand why.

First, because thankfulness evidences a humble spirit. vs. 15-16

1. God loves humility. He has made some wonderful promises to those who possess a humble spirit. **James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:5-6**
2. What is your image of a humble person? Is it somebody who walks around with their head down and poor posture and is always cutting on themselves?
3. This is not biblical humility. Humility is freedom from arrogance that grows out of the recognition that all we have comes from God. Humility and thanksgiving are therefore inseparably tied together.
4. Look in our text (vs. 15-16). He falls at the feet of Jesus and gives glory to God. This is what thanksgiving is. It is giving glory to God. True humility is not belittling yourself. Humility is praising and exalting God. It is giving Him the glory for all things.
 - Humility is turning your eyes away from you and turning to God. When we are thankful, this demonstrates humility.
5. But when we are not thankful, it is a sign of pride, and the Bible says that God resisteth the proud. cf. **Luke 14:11**

Second, because God notices a thankful person. vs. 17-18

1. Look in our text at verses 17-18. After this leper returns and gives thanks, Jesus doesn't just say, "Yea, yea, alright," and keep walking. He stops and takes special notice of this man.

2. In fact, Jesus wanted to know where the other nine were. He noticed that they didn't return and give thanks and give glory to God. He was obviously disappointed in this.
3. Do you think God notices us when we are thankful? Do you think He notices when we are unthankful? Would you consider yourself a thankful person?
4. The Bible teaches that each time we go to prayer, thanksgiving should be a part of it. **Philippians 4:6; Psalm 95:2, 100:4**
5. Do you remember the story of Daniel in the lion's den, how God shut the mouth of the lion and delivered Daniel? Here is what the Bible says about Daniel right before he was thrown in the den of lions. **Daniel 6:10** - God definitely noticed Daniel's thankful heart.

Third, because God is pleased when we are thankful. vs. 18

1. Jesus is obviously very pleased with this man here in our text. When you and I offer thanks, it is so pleasing to God.
2. In the Old Testament, they were to offer up literal sacrifices to God, and when they did, the Bible says it would be a sweet smelling sacrifice in the nostrils of God.
3. In this time of grace, we don't offer up literal sacrifices to God because Jesus Christ was the final, once-for-all sacrifice for our sins.
4. But the Bible says that when we pray and offer up praise and thanksgiving to God, it's like a sweet smelling sacrifice or aroma in the nostrils of God. **Hebrews 13:15; Psalm 107:22, 116:17**
5. God is so pleased when we are thankful. Do you desire to please God? Then each time you pray, offer up thanksgiving.

Fourth, because thankfulness demonstrates faith. vs. 19

1. Look at what Jesus tells this thankful man in verse 19. Jesus knew this man had faith because of his thankfulness.
2. Did you know the Bible says in **Hebrews 11:6** that without faith it is impossible to please God? How do we show God that we believe that He is God? One of the ways is through thanksgiving.
3. When we are thankful, it demonstrates to God that our trust and confidence is in Him and nobody else.
4. How about the other nine? Maybe their faith was in the priests (vs. 14) and that the priests would do something for them. Not this one leper - he turned around and fell at the feet of Jesus. This showed Jesus where his faith was.

In Conclusion:

1. This is a great story in the Word of God, reminding us of the importance of thankfulness or thanksgiving.
2. Be honest - which group would God classify you in? With the nine or with the one who gave thanks? Even in bad situations, there are things that we can be thankful for. **Ephesians 5:20**
3. Instead of being like these nine and going along our way and forgetting to return thanks, we must set aside time each day and count our blessings and name them one by one and become a thankful people.