

WITH THANKSGIVING!

Thanksgiving Service 2010
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Luke 17:11-13, Philippians 4:6

Luke 17:11-13 *“On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”*

Philippians 4:6-7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

There’s a difference between being polite, and being truly thankful. One is taught, and other comes from the heart.

"The poor starving children throughout the world would be thankful for any food." "They may not say, thank you, but I assure you they are truly thankful for any morsels of food you provide. But what makes you say, "Thank you?" What makes you really mean it?

Everyone seems to know the story of the 10 lepers, how Jesus cleansed them of their mortal disease and yet how only one returned to give thanks. Many say the "moral" of that story is that in all things and for all things we should truly give thanks. But the question remains; “Why didn’t the others give thanks?” The answer to the question turns out to be centered greatly on the difference between Jews and Samaritans. There are many things that could be pointed out in our text, but one of the chief reasons is that the Jews knew that they were the chosen people of God. The Samaritans, on the other hand, wished they were the chosen people. It’s a small thing, but it has considerable impact on our lives today. You see, as Christians, we too believe that we are God’s chosen people. Some Christian denominations even go so far as to create a theology of choosiness. It’s called limited atonement, a false theology saying that Jesus only died for those who accept Him as their personal Lord and Savior. Or Jesus only died for those He chose to save. In other words, they teach that Jesus death was not for all people of all times as Scripture so clearly teaches.

There’s a pride that comes from being a chosen person, and that’s the problem. When God chose the people of Israel, He chose a group so small, that it wasn’t even counted as a group. When God promised to make Abraham a great nation, Abraham hadn’t even yet had any children, and he was well beyond the typical age of, well let’s just say he was very old, beyond typical family producing time. The point is that their God, our God, is the same God who had made all of creation ex nihilo that is out of nothing. The people, those descendants of Abraham had come to know that the Lord God almighty could do great things, impossible things for man, without their input or ours, without any material contributions.

All along the way, pride would puff up the people, and they would say to themselves, because we are God’s chosen people, God owes us this or that. God is under an obligation to take care of us, and to give us what we want, after all, we are His chosen people. The people didn’t marvel at the water that came from the rock in the desert, or the manna that fell from heavens, after all, God owes us all this and much, much more, because we are His chosen people.

All of this brings us back to the 9 unthankful lepers in our story, if God owed them a healing, then there would be no reason to give thanks, for even though they were healed of a deadly disease, all they could see was that God was paying a debt, a debt that was long over due, but still an obligation, and it was about time that He paid it.

We are infected with much the same sort of sentiment. It is taught to us from early on by our families, our schools and even our society, it is summarized in the words we all know: "***We hold these truths's to be self evident, that all men are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life liberty and the pursuit of happiness.***" It says quite plainly, we are the chosen people, and God owes us certain things. Unfortunately none of these things have been promised by God, and as for being the chosen people, that was an act of God's grace that chose us. None of these things are found in the Bible as things we should expect, and things we are entitled. Or, quite simply this is one of Satan's great lies.

What can we expect? We are all sinners. We live in a sinful world. ***The wages of sin is death.*** Suffering and sickness are the results of sin. We can expect to be hungry, naked and to suffer. And if these things, which are the result of our sin don't happen, it's not because God somehow owes us a better life. Rather, God is His love, has had mercy on us. Mercy, by definition is an undeserved gift. Grace by definition is a gift which is neither earned nor deserved. Therefore, anytime we receive grace and mercy, it becomes an occasion to give thanks, for we sinful people, have not merited such kindness.

What can we expect? The Scriptures say: "***And having food and clothing let us be therefore content.***" (1Timothy 6:8). And the typical reply remains: "Well I could never live with just that!" And that's the point, there are many who live without so much as food and clothing. We have so much more, not because we have a right to it, but because God has blessed us. It's for these blessings, that we give thanks. It's for the law that shows us our sin, and reveals Satan's deceptions that we give thanks, not because we enjoy feeling guilty, but because it shows us how much we need a Savior, and it makes the good news of our Savior the greatest treasure the world will ever see. And we give thanks for the Word, for it has truly taught us that "***man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God***" (Matthew 4:4).

So we give thanks to God for His grace and His mercy, and we follow our Savior. After all, where else could we go, who else could we follow? Jesus is the way the truth and the life. Jesus is the vine that feeds the branches. Jesus is the Good Shepherd tending the flock. Jesus is the one who gave His life for ours. So we give thanks for all that God has done, and what He keeps on doing.

May we never fail to remember our God who has been so generous that He sent His only Son to save us! For what Jesus has done, let us truly be thankful. ***O' give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, and His mercy endures forever,*** In Jesus name, Amen and amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, AMEN!



Praise the LORD! Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. ~ Psalm 106:1