

Only One Gave Thanks
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
September 8, 2024

Text: Luke 17:11-19

Purpose: To awaken the need to give thanks to God and to others.

THE CADDY¹

Two golfers stepped up to the first tee on the St. Andrews course in New York. The older golfer was a kindly man who played a thoughtful, deliberate game. The younger golfer was full of pride and impatience.



On the first hole the younger golfer sliced and lost his ball in the tall grass. He hit another one and had a score of 8 instead of 4 or 5. And the next hole was even worse.



Frustrated, he began hollering at the caddy: "Keep your eyes peeled. I'm not here to do your job for you!" Thereafter, every bad shot was the caddy's fault! At the end of the first 9 holes, the younger golfer was so upset that he discharged the caddy and carried his own bag. "That caddy made me nervous. He doesn't like me, and I blankety-blank sure don't like him! I say good riddance to him!"



After several more holes had been played without a word, the older golfer broke the silence: "Several years ago a little kid from Yonkers came up here and became a caddy. He was a sweet-natured boy; quick-witted, willing, and had a nose for golf. Everybody liked him. His name was William; he had a clubfoot. But that didn't affect his caddying. It was a pleasure to go out with him."

"A famous doctor, a member of the club, became interested in William and took him South that winter and operated on his foot. When William returned, he went back to caddying. The doctor, however, had to give up golf shortly after that because of his health. And it wasn't long after that the doctor died.



"Months later I was playing a round of golf with William carrying my bag. It was spring, and the fields and hedges were alive with blossoms. William stopped several times to gather flowers until he had quite a bouquet. 'Who's the girl, William?' I asked. 'I haven't any girl, sir,' he said. 'They're for my friend, the doctor, twice a week I take flowers to his grave.'

"Now that's a caddie worth having," the younger golfer said. "What ever happened to him?" The older man paused and then replied, "For 9 holes he was carrying your bag."

Wow! Can you imagine how small that young golfer felt now?!

Have you ever had a time in your life, once you reflected upon it, you realize you really blew it! I think all of us gathered here have missed a great opportunity to back up from our selfish world and simply say "Thanks!" to those around us.



- Maybe it is someone you dearly love and you have taken them for granted.
- Maybe it is someone that works with you or for you and you fail to say "Thanks" for the good work they do.
- Maybe it is someone that waits on your table, serves you your coffee, waits on you at the convenience store, cuts your hair at the barber shop or beauty shop, or holds the door for you as you are coming in behind them.

Our world has lost a lot of civility, kindness, and charity (an Old English word for love).

I have heard a lot of people say, "Can you believe how that person acted!"

- I cannot believe that person cut me off in traffic!
- That store clerk was very rude to me!
- That politician is acting stubborn and will not vote the way I want them to in the latest budget/debt ceiling impasse!

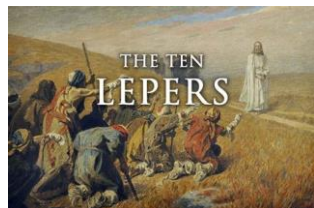


At the heart of all of this is a lack of thankfulness and gratitude.

Today's scripture passage involves a situation in Jesus' life that occurred one day. Only one person gave thanks. It is the story of the cleansing of the Ten Lepers.

Ten Lepers Cleansed

¹¹ Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.



¹² Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off.

¹³ And they lifted up their voices and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

¹⁴ So when He saw them, He said to them, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.

Jesus was traveling through a small village when a group of unclean untouchables saw Him coming. Instead of running up to see Jesus – they yelled out to Him. They were not allowed to enter into the crowds that may have been following Jesus. They had to stay a certain distance in order to not contaminate others.



They felt that Jesus could help them with their problem and they cried out to Him, “**Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!**” They probably had heard how Jesus had healed many

and they wanted the same thing.

The scripture says, “*Jesus saw them.*” What an amazing few words. “*Jesus saw them!*” I believe it means He turned and gave them His full attention to their need and really understood how desperate their plight was.

It is in the heart of God to “see” our situations as well. God sees all and knows all. At times God chooses to act, at times God chooses to wait. Sometimes God even says “No.” In this situation, Jesus spoke the word, and they were healed.



Ours is not to know the why – why God heals in one situation and not in others, ours is but to trust the One who made us.

Jesus spoke up and gave them instructions. We need to keep in mind, they were some distance from Jesus. He did not touch them. He did not send one of His disciples to touch them. He did not spit on the ground and make mud. He simply spoke and gave instructions to go and see the priest.



As they turned – trusting Jesus at His word – and went to go and show themselves to the priests. The priests, according to the laws found in Leviticus, were the ones in the community that determined if you were clean and if they can return to the community and their family.

Can you imagine the jubilation! Can you imagine the transformation such a healing would bring about? You can now be with your family. You can visit with your neighbors. You can tend to your garden. You can be useful to the ones you love – once again.

Jesus understood how this healing touch would impact their lives. I believe Jesus expected some kind of acknowledgment for what He had done for these ten lepers. The scripture goes on to say ...

¹⁵ And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, ¹⁶ and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.



¹⁷ So Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? ¹⁸ Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹ And He said to him, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”

Here is another story of an outcast Samaritan. You remember another story Jesus told of the Good Samaritan who helped someone that was badly beaten on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem.

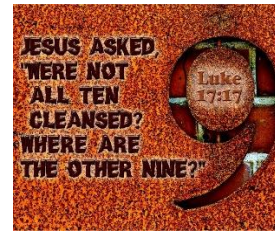


In this case, this man, when he realized he was healed, turned back to see Jesus. The others were still on their way to see the priest to get medical clearance. This man, wanted to praise God and give Him the glory for what God had done.

If God has done a good work in your life, you need to praise Him. The scripture says this man praised God with a **LOUD** voice. He was not ashamed. He was not worried

about what the neighbors would say. His joy was so great, he could not contain it!

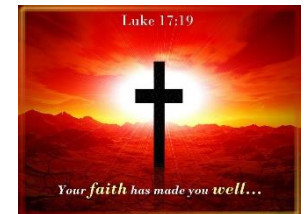
The man came to Jesus, fell at Jesus' feet, and gave thanks. He humbled himself. He praised God for what was done.



Jesus pointed out the obvious, glaring omission. Where were the other nine? Were they so wrapped up in their lives, in obtaining a medical clearance, that they did not even take a few minutes to give thanks?

How many of us have struggled with a situation in our lives and once it was resolved, we took credit instead of turning to God and giving Him thanks for His intervention? How many of us have had a significant medical problem and once it was resolved, we returned back to our old way of living and NEVER gave God the praise He deserves.

When Jesus said to this man, “*Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well,*” I don’t believe the other nine’s leprosy returned. I believe once the Lord healed them, they were healed. I don’t think it was their faith that caused them to be healed. If so, they would not have needed Jesus to say the word of healing. I believe the healing Jesus was speaking for this one that returned to give thanks was about a spiritual healing. His faith in Jesus brought about salvation for his soul! His trust and faith in Jesus is what made an eternal difference in this man’s life.



The crux of this parable lies in the fact that this Samaritan “Gave Thanks” and “Placed His Faith in Jesus.”

I have come to understand, probably more than any other time in my life, that “Giving Thanks” is the key that unlocks our relationship with one another, and God.



FBC Elon

I have a friend, David Durham, who is now the pastor of First Baptist Church in Elon. For many years, he served as the Associate Pastor and Youth Minister. While working on his Doctor of Ministry degree at Campbell, I was his supervisor for his project. He wanted to have a weekend retreat for his Senior Adults and invited me to come up and talk about “Thankfulness.”

The Friday evening session was to be focused on “Thankfulness for God’s Creation” and the Saturday morning session was to focus on “Thankfulness to God for giving long lives to serve Him.”



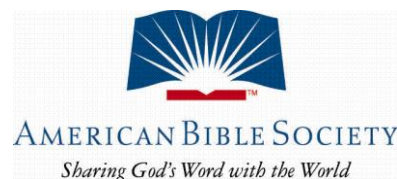
Of all the topics I could have talked about – David selected “Thankfulness.” Of all the topics David could have chosen, I would have to say, thankfulness is one of the areas in which I must admit, I fail most at.



In preparation for going to speak to the group, I immediately thought of the song, “Give Thanks.” We shared the words in this song together that

weekend as we focused on this topic of Thankfulness. The words of the song are this:

Give Thanks, with a grateful heart.
Give Thanks to the Holy One.
Give Thanks because He’s given
Jesus Christ His son.
And now, let the weak say, “I am strong.”
Let the poor say, “I am rich
because of what the Lord has done for us.”
Give Thanks. We give thanks!



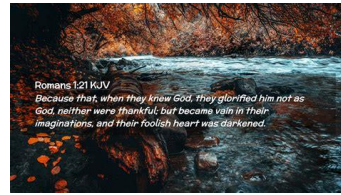
The first time I heard this song I was in Moscow in 1991 as a part of a One Million Bible distribution through the American Bible Society. Integrity’s Hosannah! Music Company sent some cassette tapes with Christian praise and worship music on it. I got a copy and listened to the song, “Give Thanks” for the first time in the Russian language. When I came home, I called Integrity Music and asked what the name of that song was. They helped me and we determined it was “Give Thanks” by Don Moen.

In my time with the group at Elon, I came to understand, we need to cultivate a thankful heart. Our thankfulness should carry us back to the very beginning. We need to be thankful, first of all, that God loved us so much, that He created us!



Everywhere we turn, we can see the hand of God. We can see God has made us, God has created the world in which we live, and He even gives us the very air we breathe.

As hard as it is to believe, there are people that do not glorify or honor God in any way. Romans 1:21 speaks of the consequences of failing to be thankful.



“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified [him] not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”
(Romans 1:21)

There are tragic consequences for us when we fail to give thanks back to God. Our hearts become darkened, we become blind to the light of the truth, and those individuals that reject God are allowed to be drawn deeper and deeper into a pit of sin of their own making. As you read on in Romans 1, you see all manner of degrading behavior people become involved with when they **fail to have a thankful heart** towards God.



I am glad we do set aside a day of Thanksgiving every year. Before you know it, it will be Thanksgiving. But for most people, their focus is on themselves instead of God.

It appears there is an atheistic revival happening here in America, instead of a God centered revival. We are fed the lie that everything that is created happened by chance. Evolution is taught as science and embraced as absolute

truth. Evolution has become the substitute for a Divine Creator.



What does the Bible have to say about someone that denies God? Psalm 14:1 and 53:1 says, *“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’*” I am of the opinion we should make April 1st – National Atheist’s Day.

How can you miss the truth of Creation? If we look at any item we purchase today, a cell phone, an automobile, a house, a computer – you know there was a design and a designer, you see the results of the creation and know there was a creator.



Romans 1:20 tells us we are without excuse: *“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”*

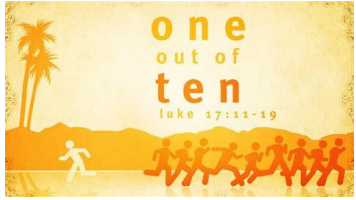
Why do you think so many people do not want to admit there is a God?

- Because they would have to be accountable to God!
- They would have to give an account for the sins they have committed!

The sin nature within us all makes us want to rebel against God.

Our failure to give God the Glory He deserves (To Give Thanks) puts us on a path of embracing sin and turning from God.

When we nurture and develop a heart of thankfulness – We begin to take our eyes off of ourselves and begin to focus on the One we need to be focusing on – the Lord. The Lord has created everything – including us



There was only one out of ten lepers that took the time to give God the Glory and to thank Jesus Christ for what He had done. Are you the “one out of ten” that praises God OR are you a part of the nine not praising and thanking God? As believers in Jesus Christ, we should have every reason to Praise God.

Today, you may be in one of these “pits” we often fall into. Maybe you are experiencing a time in your life where you cannot think of one thing for which to be thankful. Maybe this is your theme song:

"Nobody likes me, everybody hates me,
Guess I'll go eat worms,
Long, thin, slimy ones; Short, fat, juicy ones,
Itsy, bitsy, fuzzy wuzzy worms.

We need to shake off those self-defeating thoughts and begin to focus on how much God loves us. If we begin to focus on the goodness of God, we could spend hours listing our blessings.

The older I have gotten; I have found it is the little things that mean the most to me.

Hearing children laugh	A smile
A kind word	A simple act of compassion
A card when you are sick	Giving a bag of food
Buying a Christmas Gift for a child	
A prayer at a critical moment	

You may have your list of special – little things – that brighten your day.



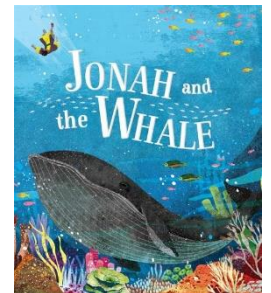
Can you give the Lord “Thanks” for everything? Some people gathered here this morning may have had some difficult things to come your way. Maybe death, maybe sickness, financial difficulty – Can you give the Lord “Thanks” for everything?

1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, “*In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*” Can you give thanks even when the bad comes?

When we fail to give God the thanks He deserves, it causes our natural tendency of sin to rear its ugly head. It takes us down a path of foolishness and spiritual darkness. Thanking God puts us on a path of purpose, wisdom and deliverance.

Do you remember the story of Jonah?

One day the Lord told Jonah to go to Nineveh and tell them of the coming judgment if they did not repent. Jonah knew the Lord would forgive those awful people in Nineveh. He didn't want them

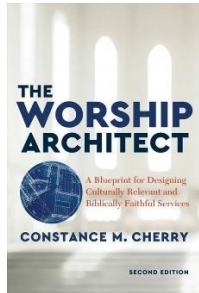


forgiven: he wanted them judged! Instead of being obedient to what the Lord told Jonah to do, he headed in the opposite direction to thwart the purposes of God.

While at sea, a wild storm arose and, after casting lots, they determined that Jonah was the cause of their distress. They reluctantly threw him overboard, the storm ceased, and Jonah was swallowed up by a whale.

From the belly of that sea animal that swallowed Jonah, he repented and acknowledged his sin. Jonah said, *“But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of **thanksgiving**; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.”* (Jonah 2:9) Once the thanksgiving praises began to flow, Jonah was spit out of the whale’s belly onto dry ground.

I pray the Lord doesn’t have to go to that extreme in our lives to change our hard – unthankful – hearts.



The Worship Architect

As many of you are aware, I am a part of a Peer Learning Group that has been meeting for 20 years now. One year our central learning focus was on the topic of Worship. To help us in our focus on this topic, we studied the book, “The Worship Architect” by Constance M. Cherry.

The first chapter in this book reminded us that God is the initiator of worship.

God initiates a relationship with us in creation
– we respond.

God initiates salvation – we respond.

In the case of the Ten Leper’s, Jesus Christ initiated the healing they so desperately needed. As a result, only one came back to Jesus, bowed down and worshipped Him. He gave glory to God.



We cannot give God anything that He doesn’t already own. He doesn’t need our money. He doesn’t need our property or land. The Lord is self-existent.

But the Lord chose to create us for a relationship with Him. According to the Westminster Confession, the chief end of man – is to Glorify God!

That is what the Lord requires of us. To respond out of gratitude and love. The only thing we can give God – is ourselves.



One day a church was taking up the offering and a little boy had nothing to give. He so desperately wanted to give something. As they took the offering plates up to the front, the little boy went forward and placed the offering plate on the floor and stepped into it. He said, “I give myself to the Lord.”

D. L. Moody, the evangelist said in 1873, “The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to Him. By God’s help, I aim to be that man.”



May we all be able to say, “Lord, give me a thankful heart,
to love and serve you!”

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Illustration from Sermon Central, from a sermon preached by Melvin Newland,
Newland, Thanksgiving and Praise, 11/24/2010.