



When Love comes to Town:

Close Encounters With Jesus

HomeGroups@West

Being Thankful:

Session 4

Luke 17: 11-19 Can Lepers change their Spots?

“You say grace before meals. All right. But I say grace before the concert and the opera, and grace before the play and pantomime, and grace before I open a book, and grace before sketching, painting, swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing and grace before I dip the pen in the ink.” — G. K. Chesterton

When we hear this quote, perhaps it reveals a core distinctive of how followers of Jesus are meant to be perceived by our audience of the world.

READ

Luke 17:11-19

Which, then, is the more surprising: the fact that one person came back, shouted for joy, and fell down at Jesus' feet? Or the fact that nine didn't?

Luke our witness of Jesus, once again focuses on Jesus' attitude to the outsider. This Samaritan man put to shame the Jews who had been healed but who didn't say 'thank you'.

Perhaps, once they'd seen the priest (the priest who lived locally had the responsibility to declare when people were healed from such diseases), they were afraid to go back and identify themselves with Jesus, who by now was a marked man. Perhaps, having realized they had been healed, they were so eager to get back to their families, whom they hadn't been able to live with all the time the disease had affected them, that they simply didn't think to go back and look for Jesus. (Would our priority be any different?)

Luke doesn't say that they were any less cured, but he does imply that they were less grateful. At the beginning of Luke 17, Jesus teaches about humility, the response of this leper is a vivid follow-on lesson in gratitude. Humility is

illustrated when only the outsider gives God the glory, showing up the Jews whose very name reminded them to praise God (the word 'Judah' in Hebrew means 'praise'). Luke however is extending his view beyond the nine lepers, it is all of us who fail to thank God 'always and for everything', as Paul puts it (**Ephesians 5.20**). We know with our heads, if we have any Christian faith at all, that our God is the giver of all things: every mouthful of food we take, every breath of air we inhale, every note of music we hear, every smile on the face of a friend, a child, a spouse – all that, and a million things more, are good gifts from his generosity.

1. In the moment that Luke describes, if you were that healed person, what would you be thankful for?
2. What challenges would still have remained for you as you sought to step back into your life?
3. How do we grapple with a narrative that we have an absolute right to health, happiness and every possible creature comfort?
4. How can we practically shape our attitude of thankfulness?
5. How does this attitude of thankfulness transform us and others?

Jesus' closing words to the Samaritan invite a closer look. The word for 'get up' is a word early Christians would have recognized as having to do with 'resurrection'. Like the prodigal son, this man 'was dead, and is alive again'. New life, the life which Israel was longing for as part of the age to come, had arrived in his village that day, and it had called out of him a **faith** he didn't know he had. **Faith and healing go hand in hand**. Once again, 'faith' here means not just any old belief, any generally religious attitude to life, but the belief that **the God of life and death is at work in and through Jesus**, and the trust that this is not just a vague general truth but that it will hold good in this case, here and now. This **rhythm of faith and gratitude** simply is what being a Christian, in the first or the twenty-first century, is all about.

thank
you
LORD

Pray

Take time to pray words of thankfulness

Pray that this attitude would grow in your life and shape your witness.

Inspirational &
practical reading on
thankful living-----

A DARE TO
LIVE FULLY
RIGHT WHERE
YOU ARE

one thousand gifts

ANN
VOSKAMP

