

A Thankful Life

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[0:00] about thankfulness today among a baby's first words and we teach them even before they can speak to say ta don't we many of us have been taught many many times don't forget to say thank you and it's good for us it's good to be thankful to realize how much we have to give thanks for and this story reminds us that also we are to think about who we are to give thanks to our god and our savior because saying thank you is also among a christian's first words it is a vital part of our vocabulary we never stop saying thank you to god for who he is as our father as our lord as our savior and what he's done for us in giving us jesus i came across this quote which i found helpful from a chap called dustin crowe he said true gratitude christian gratitude doesn't exist in a vacuum it has an object we enjoy the gift and we exalt the giver and the samaritan that we meet today is a pattern of that a pattern of a truly thankful life and hopefully we can learn from him together we have a day of thanksgiving as the church but truly every time we gather to worship thanksgiving should be a dominant note we give thanks for the gospel for his salvation that jesus loves to seek and to save but to think about this story we also need to ask ourselves the question why does luke record the story at this point and why does the healing take place at this moment because if you've been with us for the last few weeks we've been on the journey of jesus to jerusalem and he's been speaking to huge crowds of people and all the way along we've been seeing two different responses to jesus and we're being reminded of that today that while the whole crowd are sharing privileges and all these ten lepers share the same privileges they see jesus the savior they hear his words of mercy they receive a miracle just like many in the crowd they don't accept they don't live thankful lives it's just the one who comes back and so it's important for us to consider our response to jesus as we are gathered here together in this place but let's look at our story and let's see what this story has to teach us about thankfulness first of all as we encounter the one the men describe as the master so in verse 11 and we discover jesus on his way to jerusalem we're being reminded he's on his way to the cross deliberate journey and he traveled along the border between samaria and galilee now these borderlands for most people in jesus day were also the badlands this is a place you would not want to go and people were fearful of it the people that lived there were often regarded with hatred because they were not true israelites there was a division but jesus does that wonderful thing where he deliberately goes he goes off route but it's exactly on his route his rescue mission to extend god's grace it takes him to this area the borderlands the badlands why is that it's because of who jesus is as the master yes he is master and lord but he is the one who becomes a humble servant he is the one who gladly welcomes the unwelcome he gladly goes places so he can extend hope to people who were otherwise hopeless this journey of jesus is entirely in keeping with the purpose of his greater journey to jerusalem to go to the cross to lovingly give himself as a sacrifice for people like us for sinners so that we might be saved so the master that we meet in the bible is unlike i imagine any other master lord authority figure we come across he is the all-powerful son of god and he is so

wonderfully loving and merciful coming to take our place the story reminds us that we should be thankful to jesus the master we're also invited to think of his mercy as jesus was going into a village in verse 12 those 10 men who had leprosy met him and they stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice jesus master have pity on us or have mercy on us leprosy was and still is in some parts of the world a terrible disease leprosy was and still is in some parts of the world a terrible disease one that brought suffering on so many different levels there was physical suffering as the body was literally wasting away there was social suffering living in a state of permanent lockdown isolation there was spiritual suffering for a leper unable to gather with the people of god unable to be where god's word would be read where praise would be sung emotional suffering imagine having to declare as anyone came near i am unclean horrible disease no wonder it becomes a symbol of sin and spiritual disease and so these men as they recognize jesus the master they cry out for mercy they want jesus to see their need and they want jesus to do something about their need that's the wonderful thing about the mercy of god it is loving kindness in action the savior that they need is the same savior that you and i need one who has heart one who doesn't stay distant one who doesn't really care about humanity and a savior who also has power who is able to enter into our sin and our suffering and our brokenness and our brokenness and to bring change and again that's the beautiful portrait that we get of jesus he brings heart and power together like nobody else and it transforms the lives of these men and that combination of love and power we'll see again as jesus reaches his destination as he goes to the cross and then beyond that the resurrection there's the love of god to pay the price so that we might have our guilt removed and sin forgiven and sin and to receive eternal life we see his power in his resurrection and so we are thankful for the jesus let's think about the miracle verse 14 when jesus saw them he said go show yourselves to the priests and as they went they were cleansed so luke medical doctor also a notable historian carefully investigated as he wrote his gospel and luke is happy to simply record as they were going they were cleansed noting the miracle that takes place jesus of course is known as a miracle worker throughout the gospels all of them show those signs and wonders that speak to his power and authority that he's come as god's promised savior it's interesting too that non-christian sources also recognized that jesus was known for his mighty acts josephus the jewish historian who was no friend of christians spoke about jesus surprising deeds and marvels celsus a roman historian who was very anti-christian still had to acknowledge that jesus miracles were well known nobody was denying that jesus was working mighty miracles and that's significant because miracles when you read about miracles in the bible they serve as sign posts they cluster around big moments in the story of of god's salvation so there's lots of miracles around the the the times of moses and of joshua miracles that bring the people of israel from being slaves to being free miracles that see them settled in the promised land as god promised and then there's lots of miracles that cluster around the prophets elijah and elisha they have a significant ministry of turning the people back to god and so miracles are part of them being shown as god's spokesmen and of course that climax is for us in jesus the miracle worker because he is god the savior who has come among us and so we have one more miracle speaking to his identity this is god creator who has entered into creation this is the son of god with all power and authority over all things including sickness and disease this is jesus the one with power to heal the one with power to save it was a miracle that caused these men to be healed but we also recognize that it's a miracle of grace whenever a person's life is changed so for salvation the miracle of salvation the people of god should always have cause for thankfulness the story continues let's think about the music that we hear in verse 15 and 16 one of them when he saw he was healed came back praising god in a loud voice he threw himself at jesus feet and thanked him and he was a samaritan so there's a note of gratitude isn't there that sounds loud and clear you may be wondering why did jesus send the ten men to the priests and if you read the old testament you discover the priests had many functions but one of their functions was to be almost like the health inspectors of their day um as part of um keeping sort of communities from contagion and they would declare someone unclean send them away like lepers but they would also if they were healed declare them clean so so that's why they're heading there but on the journey this medical cure takes place and everything changes in a moment for these ten men physically they're made whole again socially now they're able to interact back with their family they can find a job spiritually they're able to go to the temple they're able to worship god emotionally now they're clean not unclean so that takes place and then as jesus and the great crowd around him continue on their journey to jerusalem a song comes over the hill a song of salvation here is a lone voice praising god

that he'd been healed there's a posture of humility as the man arrives back where Jesus is he throws himself at Jesus feet and thanked him and he was a Samaritan why does he include that we've been thinking in church about the reversal theme you got 10 men the least likely to be a true worshiper everybody who said what's the Samaritan guy of course but we've been reminded that God's grace doesn't work the same as the world works Christianity is about being saved by grace not about merit not about our background not about our performance so there's a surprise in that it's a Samaritan there's also a note of surprise in Jesus voice did you notice that we're not all 10 cleansed where are the other nine has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner all 10 have the same privilege all 10 receive mercy from Jesus all 10 are the subject of a great miracle from God all 10 get to see loud and clear that that Jesus is God's master but those nine while they chose I am sure to enjoy the gift that Jesus gave they did it without returning thanks to the giver they failed to return thanks to God and so as the story concludes Jesus said to the man rise and go your faith has made you well his praise and his thankful song is a sign of his faith in Jesus in his heart the song he sings is a song of salvation this man has the deeper healing the true healing not just physically but also spiritually the truth is a sign of salvation I wonder if anyone here today has ever been glad of a diversion it's a ridiculous question to ask in Edmund because we're always getting diverted and it feels like a waste of time and it's profoundly frustrating but sometimes maybe you've had this experience you get diverted and you come to a new place it's a good place or you go off track and you meet an old friend and you have an unexpected conversation you can say I'm glad of that diversion I want to suggest that Jesus diversion into the borderlands can be one of those good diversions for each one of us two ways one it serves as a timely checkup for us so leprosy that physical disease speaks to us a reminder of the bad news the disease of sin that in and of ourselves we have a sin nature that all is not well between us and God left to ourselves we cannot please God left to ourselves we cannot get to heaven to enjoy life with God God there is only one cure and it's not found in us it's found in Jesus and his work on the cross and it's only as we understand the bad news that then the good news makes sense why does Jesus go to the cross to die is because our sin is so serious our guilt is so real that the only way that we can be saved is if Jesus dies in our place the cross also reminds us that he was so loving he was ready and willing to die in our place to give us true heart healing and bring us to God it's also this diversion also becomes a timely challenge for us we're all privileged to have seen and to have heard of Jesus even if this is your first time in church we have sung and we have read and we have heard what will we do with that and this is a timely challenge to say let's be like the one who comes with faith and give thanks to Jesus don't walk away like those nine being thankful for all the things that we enjoy in life but never thinking about our God or our savior that's what the story can teach us about thankfulness but let's take a step back as it were and think briefly about some lessons connected to thinking and thanking okay because those two are connected if you think about your circle your family your friends the most thoughtful people you know are most likely also the most thankful and appreciative people you know and there is an encouragement for us as Christian people to think deeply about God and his gospel that we might live thankful lives and the spotlight is thrown on this Samaritan to help us towards that so remember this is a real story remember as Jesus is walking towards Jerusalem there are huge crowds maybe thousands of people around because they're all heading towards the festival people and in the midst of that busyness and crowd that voice breaks over them all that song and then he must have pushed himself through the crowd to fall at Jesus feet causing everyone to stop in the healing that he experienced his thoughts turned to the goodness and the kindness of God in the Lord Jesus and what he wanted more than anything was to express his thankfulness in praise to the Lord Jesus those nine enjoyed the gift only this one exalted the giver that's the lifestyle we are to practice so how can we make progress let's think together about thankfulness first of all as a way of life I love fictional detectives I've told church that before uh Sherlock Poirot two of my favorites they do what I can't do though even when I've reread a novel two or three times I still can't say a lot about me I think piece the clues together or learn to make the right deductions and connections I just can't do it but as Christians we're called to be spiritual sherlocks

[20:16] to learn to carefully observe the evidence of God's goodness and mercy in our lives so that we would turn it to thanks and praise and God's kindness and mercy those clues are scattered everywhere we have enjoyed so much kindness and mercy from God even by the time we've got here today or to think of another image we're called to be like those a

treasure hunters you occasionally see perhaps on the antiques road show they make their way onto the news you know they've been up in the pentlands and they discover this hoard of roman coins and you see the delight people have been digging hoping for treasure and they find it that's where our thankfulness will come from as the people of god as we dig into the rich treasure of god's word of the gospel where we find his mercy his living hope his eternal life and as we do that to make sure that we're giving thanks and praise to our god in the old testament mooses gave a warning to israel deuteronomy 8 that there's a wrong way to receive all god's kindness israel was warned listen when god brings you into the promised land and you've got plenty and you're at peace and everything's going well watch out because you're going to be tempted to forget god you're going to be tempted in your pride say i did that the right way to receive all god's good gifts is with humble thanksgiving especially as we consider his gift of the lord jesus in the new testament paul says to the thessalonians be joyful always praise god continually give thanks in all circumstances all circumstances whether they're good whether they're bad that's hard how do we do that well we can do it if we understand that god is in control his glory and for our good in ways that sometimes we can't and will not ever understand we're able to rejoice and give thanks in all circumstances as we live in the gospel as we're living in union with christ as we're enjoying him and all his benefits life and peace and hope and joy there's a wrong way especially when it comes to hard circumstances to respond you know bitterness and grumbling and perhaps turning away from god i love the way spurgeon talks about the right way to deal with hard circumstances spurgeon the 19th century baptist preacher suffered from severe bites of depression spiritual depression and he said this i have learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the rock of ages the pain was real but i knew that god was with him and for him thankfulness is a way of life but thankfulness when we think about it as christians is also a way to witness witness think about our world and how many negative words and attitudes we hear every day whether in conversation whether a broadcast on tv whether on social media complaints divisions fighting anger pride as christ's followers we have both a command and an opportunity to stand out to speak with different words to sing a different song to be so thankful because of god and the gospel because we're counting and naming

our blessings, that it's natural for us to look for the good, to seek the good, to promote thankfulness. Because it's the way we see our world.

This is our Father's world. He gives good gifts. His faithfulness is great. But I wonder, is this what the world hears from the church?

Are we distinctively different in the way we're living thankful lives and speaking in such a way that that thankfulness is evident?

In our conversations, in our classrooms, in our offices, is that the note we strike? As Christians, we can use what's sometimes known as the apologetic of joy.

[25:11] You know, we live in a place where many people are experiencing many good things. And one way to help people to think about God is to draw attention to the goodness of God, to move beyond.

Wasn't that a great meal? Aren't those beautiful stars? To help others to think about God through the gifts that He gives. I think it was Jonathan Edwards who encouraged people to trace the sunbeam up to the sun.

We want to practice in our own lives thankfulness to God for His everyday gifts and to help others towards that. And we can share with thankfulness all that Jesus means to us in our everyday life. What difference it makes to have Jesus as we walk through lives and to express our thanks publicly. Because people notice.

And it surprises people. And it's a great way to give glory to God. And that's important because the last thing I want to say is that thankfulness is to be for us a way of worship.

[26:21] Gratitude is so important to faith. We're always invited to remember salvation is a gift we enjoy.

God is generous. We don't deserve it. It is by grace you have been saved through faith. And even that faith is not from yourselves.

It is the gift of God. Not by works. So that none of us would boast. Unless we're boasting about how good Jesus is. The Samaritan came to understand that.

And as he started thinking about the goodness of God, you couldn't stop him from thanking and praising. And as we understand that Jesus offers more than physical cleansing.

That Jesus at the cross and in the gospel promises that when we have faith in him, he will remove the guilt of our sin. He restores us to relationship with God.

[27:24] He gives us the promise of eternity in a world free of sin and sickness and sadness forever. As we see and understand that and live in that reality.

More and more we'll find ourselves like this Samaritan. Falling on our faces. Giving thanks.

Because to give thanks to God is to worship.

Thanks. Thank you. Thank you. Thanks. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

Bye. Bye. Bye. Time. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

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