

A Thankful Heart

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[0:00] As I start, I just want you to imagine for a moment that you are someone who's been left out all your life. So imagine, for instance, never being invited to a single party. Worse than that, being ostracized even by your own family.

So much so that it's been a long time since you've been home for Christmas or New Year. If people saw you walking along the streets, they would cross the road to walk along the other side before crossing back again.

After they've passed you. Needless to say, no one will give you a job. And so you live on the pity of others, begging for handouts wherever you can.

In the end, all you're left is to hang out with others just like you. That's the only social contact you're able to have. Then one day, somebody comes along and changes all that.

Somebody does something miraculous so that you can rejoin society again. Now, how would you respond to that? How would you treat the one who's just helped you?

[1:10] Well, this is the very situation that we find ourselves in Luke chapter 17 tonight. For each of the lepers in our story is exactly like that. Exactly like the person I've asked you to imagine yourself to be.

Now, the law in those days stipulated that if you had leprosy, then you were unclean. And the only way that you wouldn't then infect others was for you to live outside the camp, the city or the village.

You were thus cut off from people, from humanity. From essentially what it means to be human. To love and be loved. And so, as Jesus is outside this village between Galilee and Samaria, he comes across these ten lepers.

Verse 12. They call out to him from a distance in a loud voice. You see, they can't come any closer, can they? Because of their disease. So, all they can do is cry from a distance. Jesus, Master, have pity on us.

And so begins this surprising encounter between Jesus and the lepers. Now, I say surprising because there are a few surprises in this encounter. First, Jesus' response is surprising.

[2:16] Notice that he doesn't heal them immediately. Instead, he asks them simply to go and show themselves to the priest. It's probably a test by Jesus. Having come to Jesus, they now need to choose whether they are willing to obey.

They're willing to do that even when they haven't received anything from Jesus as yet. So, it was an act of faith. I believe at some level that Jesus' words were worth obeying.

But I guess when you're desperate, I mean, you'd try anything, wouldn't you? If, for example, you had terminal cancer and a doctor offered you a possible cure or treatment that was still highly experimental, it comes with lots of side effects, you would still be tempted to try, wouldn't you?

After all, what have you got to lose? And so, I don't think we actually know the true nature of each of the lepers' faiths. In fact, it's likely that they're probably different to each other.

Some of them may even have none and they're just following along because the others were doing it. But in the end, what matters was that they actually did go, which means that they were all cleansed, they were all healed, whatever the true condition of their faith.

[3 : 34] But then we discover another surprise and that is only one turned back. We discover that in verse 16 that he wasn't even a Jew, but he was a Samaritan. But he praises God with a loud voice and then throws himself at Jesus' feet in worship and thanks Him.

Now, notice the volume of the praise. It was as loud, if not more so than the cries of help. Here, the Greek words are literally megaphone, right? Mega for big and phone for phonics or sound.

So, he was actually praising God with a loud speaker. Now, why do I say that's surprising? Well, because if you remember the start and I asked you what you would do if somebody like Jesus came along and turned your whole life around in a dramatic fashion, what would you have done?

Well, my guess is that you'd probably, at the very least, turn back to acknowledge or thank Jesus. Even if you didn't fall at his feet or give praise to God with a megaphone, you would at least have turned back.

It's like how our parents used to teach us. Some of us still teach our children. Say thank you even for the smallest of favors, right? And yet, none of the nine returned.

[4 : 50] Surprising, isn't it? Even though this was much bigger than a small favor. It's as if they couldn't wait to get checked off by the priest so that they can then just get on with life.

Get back to family. Make up for all those lost time, lost months and years. Only the Samaritan turned back. And because he did, he showed something which the others didn't have.

And he received something from God which the others didn't. Something more precious, I think, than the healing. For he not only received the gift, he had an encounter with the giver.

He wasn't only healed, he came to know the healer. For when he turned back in praise and worship, Jesus makes a pronouncement which only he receives.

Jesus says to him in verse 19, Rise and go, your faith has made you well. Actually, a more helpful translation is, Rise and go, your faith has saved you.

[5 : 54] Saved you. And so this is the reality, that ten lepers were healed that day, but only one was saved. All had faith to some degree, but only one had saving faith.

Now, that might lead some of you to ask, does that mean that not all faith saves? Well, the story seems to suggest this, doesn't it? Because of what Jesus says to this leper that he doesn't say to the rest.

And I think it's confirmed elsewhere in the Bible. So, for instance, in John chapter 2 and verse 23, we have these verses which are on the screen. This was at the start of Jesus' ministry. Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover during the feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did.

But Jesus did not commit himself to them, because he knew all men and had no need that anyone should testify of men, for he knew what was in men or humans. So, many believed in Jesus, but they only did so solely for his miraculous power.

And so it says that Jesus would not entrust or commit himself to them. He would not reciprocate their faith, so-called, as it were. And so they were left without a real knowledge of Jesus or a right relationship with him.

[7 : 12] Elsewhere, too, we see in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 7 and verse 21 and 23. Again, I've got it on the screen. Jesus says this, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

For on that day, Jesus says in verse 23, I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers. So I think there's enough in the Bible to conclude that not all faith saves.

And if we look around today, I think we do see people with this sort of faith as well. There are those who, if you ask them, would be happy to actually affirm that God exists.

They may even say that they believe in Jesus. When census time comes around, provided they manage to get online and not crash, they would have ticked Christian or Anglican or some other denomination.

Last time around, about five years ago, 62% of Australians did this in the census. This time around, probably it's going to be low. But the percentages would still be higher than the committed Christians who come each week to church, wouldn't it?

[8 : 20] And if you ask many of these Australians, they would tell you that if there was a need, they would shoot a prayer up to God. They might even cry out to him for help.

And I suspect when things come good again, though, they would waste no time in getting back to life and living as though Jesus didn't matter. Now, ultimately, God is the judge of every heart.

So I'm not suggesting we go around and try and say who's saved, who's not, based on how they sort of exercise Thanksgiving or not. But we see today in our story that there's actually a way of responding that clearly shows or expresses a saving faith.

And that is the way that the tenth letter followed. He returned to Jesus with praise and thanksgiving and worshipped at Jesus' feet.

So what can we learn from his example? Well, I think we can learn that great though the gift is, what is even better is to be in right relationship with the giver. That was seen when he returned to worship and thank God.

[9 : 25] You see, God in his kindness and mercy will often respond to our cries of help. And this even to those who may not have great faith in him.

But God does this actually with a greater end in mind. He may listen to our cries, but actually after he's answered them, what he wants is for us then to turn back to him.

His help is so that we will then recognize who he really is, our Lord and Savior. And then when we recognize that to then lead us to worship him and to get into a right relationship with him, that is by trusting in his son Jesus.

So often when we cry out for help and God answers, the important thing is then, is that we get back into a right relationship with him or maintain that right relationship with him.

Remember the giver and not just the gift. Second, the lepers' example show us that genuine faith or saving faith always expresses itself in thanks to God and praise to him.

[10 : 37] Someone who has put their trust in Jesus, and who has learned to depend on God for their life, can't help but have a thankful heart. He or she knows that God's the giver of all good things in life.

Even those things that we sometimes have to work hard for ourselves. You know, our VC results, or the job promotion, or that interview. Even though we've had to put in the effort, at the end of the day, everything should be seen as gifts from God.

Even our talents and our abilities are gifts from God. And so I believe there's no way, no other way to nurture saving faith than to cultivate a life of thanksgiving.

Now, the leper may have just displayed this one instance of thanks to God, but we have a chance to be thankful to God as a way of life. That is, we thank God not just for one-off or momentous blessings in our lives, but we make it a habit of being thankful each and every day for the big things as well as the small things.

For life, even when things don't turn out for the best. Because after all, no matter how difficult life is, if we put our trust in Jesus, then we can always be thankful, can't we?

[11:53] Because we have the greatest gift that God has given us, our salvation, our security for all eternity in the hands of God. And, you know, speaking for experience, the more I am thankful, then the more I actually learn to depend on Him.

Week by week, day by day, moment by moment. I'm not saying I'm doing it perfectly, but I find that if I enter into this discipline of being thankful, of consciously telling myself, I need to thank God, even when I'm not feeling like it, then I learn more and more to depend on God, to trust in Him.

And strangely, He changes my heart so that what I might not feel at the start, I start to feel afterwards. And so in that sense, every Sunday should be Thanksgiving Sunday, right?

And every service should be a service of Thanksgiving. And I have to say, it is for us who come here each week, I give thanks to God that when we come each week, we do actually take time to thank God.

The Anglican prayer book is very helpful, you know, it actually puts us in a posture of thanksgiving by the very prayers that they teach us. So it's great that we do thank God for who He is.

[13:08] We do thank God for what He's done week in, week out. But I also think it's great today to have Thanksgiving Sunday with a capital T. because I think it allows us to just set aside some time to hear from not just me, not just from the service leader, but to hear from everyone what God has been doing specifically in our lives.

And by doing that, to really encourage each other to go, hey, God has been at work amongst us. There is so much more to be thankful for. Sometimes we just think of our own lives and we go, yeah, we thank God for that.

But when we hear about all the other stuff that God is still doing with all of us, it just increases our thanksgiving, does it not? So I'm going to keep my talk short today because I want to allow you time to do just that.

So in a while, I'm going to hand over the microphone, not the megaphone. But I want to, although you can, praise God, with a loud voice through a microphone, but I want to encourage you all to give voice to God's goodness in your lives.

As I've said, it doesn't have to be miraculous or momentous according to your own eyes. Remember, it's not so much about you, but about what God has done and then to give Him glory.

[14:29] So I invite all of you, from the youngest, I think that could be Lauren, to the oldest, I didn't say who that might be. Anyone can come up, okay?

It needn't be too long, one or two sentences, that's fine. In fact, it shouldn't be too long. So I want as many as possible to, I've given enough time to do that, so I want as many people as possible to do that.

But first, I'm going to invite Jillian to come up. She's going to read from Psalm 30, which is our Old Testament or Psalm reading. So if you can turn to that, then you might be encouraged to praise God along.

And after she's done that, she's going to step down and then people can just come forward to share and then at the end, I'll pray and give thanks to God for that. Thanks, Jillian.

So yeah, I'm just really grateful for this church, for you guys.

[15:41] I think moving church this year, I was a little bit apprehensive at the start because I don't know what that might mean and how I would kind of fit in, but I'm just so thankful to God for you guys, how you've included me, how you've made me feel really welcome and how you've been praying for me.

So I thank God for that. I want to say thanks to God for the encouragement that he gives those of us who are older to see the faith and maturity in the youth and the young adults in this congregation.

Thanks be to God that he's enabled us all to grow, but thanks to you younger ones. You're the future. Glory be to God.

Thank you. Hi.

Hello. My family, we moved back to Australia about a year ago and so we've been here for pretty much a year and I just wanted to say I'm really thankful for this church. I heard about this church when I met Andrew Reid in London and he said, and my teachers as well in London said, HCD is the place to go, so here we are.

[17:06] And so I just wanted to thank, I'm thankful to God for you guys for welcoming me and my family here in the morning and also here at 5pm. So really grateful for you guys.

Really grateful to God for teachers like Mark and Pricey and Andrew Reid as well. A really committed Bible teaching church is hard to find. So thanks to God.

Just on that note after Vijay shared, this is a bit random but I was actually in prep with Vijay in primary school and hadn't seen him at all until he turned up at church last year and honestly all I can remember is when he did naughty things in class.

So it's been a constant encouragement when he is up the front and just to see what God has done and it wasn't a Christian school and yeah, so just praise God for that.

Thank you. Did you want to say something?

[18:19] Okay, I'll speak then. Yeah, so I guess for Krista and me, this thing is a source of thankfulness and yeah, it was, it's, yeah, and it's a journey that keeps rewarding us with lots of things including poo but yeah, we're just really grateful to God for her and yeah, for the support we've received as well.

And just, and just on a similar note for Esther, myself and Jemima who, I think Esther's trying to put her to sleep so I don't know where she is, she's probably getting walked around somewhere at the back but I'm really grateful to God for the safe arrival of Jemima.

It's been, it hasn't been easy leading up to it and it's, it's, we've also had to deal with grief along the way and miscarrying our first child but it's, it's also now time for thanksgiving and praise and we certainly won't take this child's life for granted and thank you for being a supportive church and for the ways in which you have blessed us whether it's your prayers or support or gifts or whatever, it's certainly made it, yeah, a smoother journey than otherwise it would be so thank you and praise be to God.

I would just like to thank the Lord for Jeff and all the work he does with the youth group, it's, it's great, yeah. Thank you. I'm very thankful for this church partnering with me in the gospel with my work at AFES at Melbourne Uni, I'm finishing up at the end of the year but I'm very thankful for your prayer and financial support of me in that, thanks.

I've got a few things to give thanks for, firstly I want to really thank God for the direction that he's given the church leaders with regard to the merger so quite a few of us were a bit apprehensive at the start with regard to how it would turn out it has been an amazing journey and our church has definitely grown ever since the merger and for the people who are originally from Work Sunday I think our experience of coming to church has certainly been enriched by having so many new faces and people to learn from so thank God for actually making all that happen and for it actually turning out so well.

[21 : 21] I'd also like to thank God for equally for the gift of marriage and the gift of singleness depending on who the gift is being given to and who God has chosen to receive the gift. Helen and I are getting married next week and really thank to God for making the relationship between two very unlikely people work out and hopefully he will continue to guide us in our ministry as well once we get married and praise to God for all those things.

I had an essay but to keep it short right coming here this year I had a lot of fears fears from how to do well in school after not being in school for four years fears about community fears about adapting to a new culture and I'm really thankful to God that everything is very smooth and thankful to God that for Andrew Heather and Adam for collectively bringing me here to a great community at HTD thankful for CU I'm thankful for a chance to serve here yeah I'm even thankful that the food here is not as bad as they say so it's pretty great which a lot of people have been yeah so also recently I've chosen to to stay another year to do a trainership apprenticeship at RMITCU next year and I didn't think raising a huge sum of money would be possible but I'm really thankful that I've raised about 40% so far in maybe about two three weeks so I'm really thankful for that yeah hi everyone

I'm really thankful for God for the youth group this year thank you for giving us leaders and all the youth a lot of energy on Friday nights even after a whole week of learning and stress from all sorts of things I want to thank God for helping me Johnson and we'll really connect with our group this year and thank you for God for the camp that just passed I'd also like to thank God for making the leaders group come back with everyone on Wednesdays I really felt that it really has helped the leaders to connect with other young adults in this church thank you yeah I want to thank God for the way in which he challenges our faith and the way I know for me that he's even though it's hard he grows us in holiness so I want to thank God for continuing his work in us

I just wanted to thank God for all the opportunities that we've had to show his love and hospitality at Caracal and all the meals that he has blessed over the past year and to also thank him for the upcoming opportunities to tell people about the gospel there I want to thank God for Holy Trinity and every single one of you because it's a really great open place that we can question our faith think about things and not be judged for it I appreciate the honesty and also I guess yeah life isn't always rosy and always great but I think that this is a great place where we can be vulnerable we can be honest and without pretenses and I'm really grateful for God for that

[25 : 34] I just wanted to say actually I should really take this opportunity to thank all of you for welcoming my family in we're 1030 people and this is and I thank God for it every week almost every day and the youth group and the Bible study is fantastic and the other thing I want to say which I sort of said this morning but didn't quite finish what I want to say because I didn't think of it at the time was just I thank God every day for his means of grace to us.

And that includes the scriptures and communion together and our baptism. You know, God is so gracious and he is so truthful. What he says he will do in his word, he does.

He transforms us through the word and through our fellowship and through communion and all of it. It's wonderful. But particularly very happy to be so welcomed at this congregation.

And thank you. Thank you. It's a bit, I think everyone has come up here, I think has felt a bit strange because we're actually praying to God by thanking God.

And yet we're trying to talk to people as well. So I appreciate how you've sort of wondered whether it's a prayer or it's actually a sharing. So it's sort of a prayer, but people listening in on you, I think.

[27 : 06] But I'm going to make it easy for myself. I'm going to pray by thanking God. All right. So would you bow your eyes, bow your head, sorry, close your eyes. And I will pray and thank God for all the things that we've just heard.

Father, we thank you for all that you've done for us. And we want to thank you for the many blessings that you've showered upon us.

Even for those things that we, probably not easy at the time, I want to give thanks to you that you've put it in the hearts of many of us to see the value that you are, yeah, the value of going through those things because you're shaping us and causing us to grow in our faith as a result.

Father, tonight we've heard from some members of Christ's body, but we know that there will be more, that there are more to give thanks for.

Many of us probably have not had a chance to come forward to share. So for each of those things, if even people have thought about it in their heads but didn't get a chance to come forward, we want to thank you and we want to bring that before you as things that we are grateful for and we are full of joy for.

[28 : 29] And now, Father, specifically I want to thank you for the many who have grown in faith this year. Some have started uni or work or a new job and many have had their faith tested.

But they've also stood firm in faithfulness to you and for that we thank you. Father, we thank you for those who have stepped up to serve you, whether it's to pluck up the courage to share the gospel with others, to be more prayerful, or coming alongside those who are in need.

For this, we want to thank you as well. Thank you, Father, for those who have been generous, who have given their time and money and all their lives because they are falling in the footsteps of a generous God.

For these people, we thank you. Thank you, Father, for bringing us together as the body of Christ that even though we are different, as Victor has shared, yet we are united now in the gospel and in your son, Jesus.

Thank you, Father, for those who have joined us this year. Thank you, Father, for those who have joined us this year.

[29 : 50] For some, they have come because they have a desire to search you out and to find out more about you. Thank you, Father, that you have shown yourself to them in your son, Jesus, and through your word, the Bible.

For these people, we want to thank you. But above all, we want to thank you, Father, for giving us your son so that we may come to know you, so that we may stand blameless before you by what he's done on the cross, by his blood, so that we have a master we are able to serve, so that we have an example that we can follow.

For him, our Savior and Lord, we want to give you thanks. And it is in his name now that we want to ask all these things, giving you thanks in his name, the name of Jesus.

Amen.