

Cultivate Gratitude

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[0 : 00] But if you would please turn your Bibles to Luke chapter 17. Our attention this morning will be directed to verses 11 through 19.

! And this morning's sermon is titled Cultivate Gratitude.! And it's the sixth and the final sermon in this series on cultivating Christian values that I've been preaching on the first Sunday of each month at various points during the year.

And you may recall each of these sermons probably need to pull me down a little bit. Carol, thanks. Each of these sermons called us to cultivate a particular virtue as a church.

The first sermon was cultivate community. The second, cultivate servanthood. The third, cultivate generosity. The fourth, cultivate respect. And then last time, cultivate humility.

And this morning, we'll talk about cultivating gratitude. And once again, the motivation behind these sermons is that among people in general, and our church would be no exception, these values are not near as common as they used to be.

[1 : 31] And so with God's help, we are seeking to cultivate them and grow in them. Luke chapter 17, beginning in verse 11.

On the way to Jerusalem, he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered the village, he was met by ten lepers who stood at a distance and lifted their voices saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

When he saw them, he said to them, Go and show yourselves to the priests. And as they went, they were cleansed.

Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. And he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks.

Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, Were not ten cleansed?

[2 : 45] Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? And he said to him, Rise and go your way.

Your faith has made you well. Let's pray together. Father, we are grateful this morning that we are able to gather once again as your people on the Lord's Day in the worship in the name of Jesus. And Lord, we thank you for the privilege of being able to sit under the preaching of your word, to be addressed by you from your word.

Father, would you speak to our hearts in ways that only you can. We thank you, Lord, for the power in your word to both convict and to transform.

And we pray, Lord, that this would truly be the effect of the preaching of your word on all of our hearts. We ask in Jesus' name.

[3 : 54] Amen. What comes to your mind when you think about the last days? I think for some people, what comes to mind as they begin to think about the book of Revelation and Bible prophecy, and others think about the advancement of technology, and some somehow relate that to a future Antichrist who will rule the world, and then others think of all manner of popular last day references.

But when we think of the last days, I suspect that few people think about the Bible's description of the character traits that will mark the people of the last days.

And by the way, we've been in the last days for about 2,000 years. We find one such description in 2 Timothy chapter 3.

And one of the character traits that the Apostle Paul says will mark people in the last days is ungratefulness. Paul says people will be unthankful.

And I believe if you're halfway paying attention, you would agree with that. We are living in an increasingly ungrateful, unthankful, complaining generation.

[5 : 30] We're living in a generation where there is an indescribable amount of a sense of entitlement.

And people protest when they don't get what they feel that they are entitled to. I've read any number of articles that actually talks about the millennial generation and one of the things they say about the millennial generation is that they feel entitled to things.

And so, one of the common worldviews among some millennials, a lot of them, is an idea of socialism. That they should have particular things that others have and there should be some kind of equality in the things that we possess and the opportunities that we have.

and we all know that life is so different from that. But I think what is sad about most of this is that many who name the name of Christ are marked by the same ingratitude.

Yet the reality is that those of us who have been saved by Jesus, have been redeemed by his atoning blood that we sang about this morning.

[6 : 54] If there's ever a people who should be marked by gratitude, it should be us. In this passage that we have just read, we learn a simple but important lesson about gratitude and it is this.

Those who receive mercy should show gratitude. Those who receive mercy should show gratitude. mercy is any beneficial act that we didn't earn and we don't deserve. I want to consider in more detail this account that we have just read and for those of you who are taking notes, I've organized my thoughts around three simple points.

First, in this account, we see people needing mercy. in verse 11, Luke tells us that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem and he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee.

And I think this is an important detail because you may remember that Luke wrote his gospel for the Gentiles beginning with a man by the name of Theophilus. And this detail that Jesus was ministering in the vicinity of Samaria is a reminder that Jesus not only ministered to Jews but he also ministered to non-Jews in particular to Samaritans who were the arch enemies of the Jews.

[8 : 34] And Luke tells us that Jesus is met by ten lepers and we soon see that one of them is a Samaritan. And these ten lepers were doing what lepers were supposed to do.

We see in verse 12 it says as he entered a village he was met by ten lepers who stood at a distance. That's what they were supposed to do. They were supposed to stay away from those who were not lepers.

They were required to shout unclean so that the person approaching them would know that if they came into contact with them they themselves would also be unclean.

But interestingly although they did what they were supposed to do and keeping their distance from Jesus they didn't shout unclean. Instead they shouted to him to have mercy on them.

They cried out Jesus master have mercy on us. Now for a lot of us when we think of leprosy we think of it as a skin disease and it certainly was that but leprosy was so much more than that.

[9 : 59] leprosy in that day was in many ways a death sentence. It was a contagious disease and because it was a contagious disease and people could be infected by associating with those who had leprosy people with leprosy were separated they were exiled from families and from their communities and to be diagnosed with leprosy meant that you lost everything.

You lost everything you knew and you now would have a new family and your new family was going to be fellow lepers. I find it quite interesting that this group of lepers the prejudices that existed in the broader community didn't exist among them.

all lepers they could have a Samaritan in the midst and the Samaritan could relate to Jews because of course they were lepers though Jews and Samaritans had no dealings with each other.

One of the side effects of leprosy is that people who had leprosy were not able to feel pain and so a rat for example could come and nibble away at fingers or toes and they would just never feel it.

And so to be a leper was like living in exile under a death sentence. Lepers had no real hope of being healed or reconciled to family and friends and resuming the life they once had.

[11 : 44] It was a life of unending hopelessness. what is clear from this account though is that these lepers had heard about Jesus and these lepers obviously believed that the same Jesus they heard about who had done many other miracles obviously could heal them and they cried out to him to have mercy on them.

And that's what they needed. They needed mercy and if they truly received mercy from Jesus mercy would include cleansing from their leprosy.

These men needed mercy that only God could give and so they cried out to Jesus. when we consider the plight of these men we shouldn't miss the similarity between leprosy and sin. The same way that leprosy separates sin separates. Sin separates us from God and separates us from others.

In the same way that leprosy starts small and spreads so does sin. And in the same way that only God can cleanse leprosy only God can cleanse our sins.

[13 : 24] And I think they should cause us to consider and think about our own view of sin. Do you think that sin is manageable?

sin is something that we can control and play with in our lives to get a certain level of enjoyment but manage it in such a way that we don't pay the price of it but it doesn't affect us?

Unless you have sinned this morning my friend you're deceived. Sin is like fire and we should not play with it. It will do far more damage than we can ever dream.

sin is but if you see sin as even worse than leprosy then you're wise this morning because the truth is leprosy will not send us to hell.

Leprosy if untreated will eventually cause a person's death but it will not send that person to hell but sin if left untreated will send us to hell.

[14 : 34] And the only way to treat sin is through faith in Christ and faith in his shed blood on the cross for sinners.

And so we see these ten lepers desperately needing mercy and it's mercy that only God can give and so they cry out to the son of God Jesus Christ have mercy on us.

But not only do we see these ten lepers needing mercy in verse 14 we see them receiving mercy and this brings you to my second point receiving mercy.

Look at what Luke tells us in verse 14. He writes when he saw them he said to them go and show yourselves to the priests and as they went they were cleansed.

Jesus had mercy on them. And it was expressed in this statement go and show yourselves to the priests. Luke tells us that as they went they were cleansed.

[15 : 47] And it certainly could not be that just the leprosy just stopped and was no longer going to spread in their bodies. It would no longer consume their bodies and cause joints to fuse.

And that they would no longer be able to feel pain. There was so much more than that. You see if all that happened was the spread of the leprosy was stopped in their bodies they really wouldn't know it.

Something much more than that actually happened to them. Actually what Luke tells us is Luke tells us further in verse 15 he says when one of them saw he was healed.

He saw he was healed. Wasn't just something he felt it wasn't just something that went on inside of his body that they had to wonder about. He saw that he was healed.

and this speaks to undeniable visible proof that he was cleansed from leprosy and also healed of its effects.

[17 : 01] So toes and fingers that had been fused together and deformed by leprosy became normal. He could now feel and touch. They asked Jesus for mercy and he gave them mercy in the form of healing.

Healing they didn't deserve. Yet Jesus had mercy on them and he gave it to them. But then Luke tells us that something rather shocking happened after that.

He tells us that although these ten lepers who needed mercy received mercy he tells us in verse 15 that only one returned to Jesus to show gratitude for his healing and this brings me to my third and final point showing gratitude.

Luke tells us what happened in verses 15 and 16. Look there again at what he writes.! Then one of them when he saw that he was healed turned back praising God with a loud voice and he fell on his face at Jesus feet giving him thanks.

! Now he was a Samaritan. Here's a beautiful picture of gratitude from someone who received mercy.

[18 : 34] When he was healed his first priority became returning to Jesus to give thanks not going to the priests to show that he was cleansed. He turned back praising God with a loud voice and notice that initially in verse 12 when he stood at a distance he doesn't stand at a distance now he runs to Jesus he falls on his face at the feet of Jesus giving him thanks for the evidence that he knew that he was healed.

And Jesus responds with three questions. First he asks were not ten cleansed? And we all know the answer to that yes ten were cleansed.

And then he asked where are the nine? Where are the nine? This one came back praising God and giving thanks to Jesus where are the nine?

This question reveals that Jesus had an equal expectation that the other nine who were healed would also return to give thanks.

But they didn't. But Jesus had this expectation. The reason he had this expectation is that those who receive mercy should show gratitude.

[20 : 09] two of the were the nine? What were they doing when this man, the Samaritan, returned to give thanks to Jesus?

Well, I guess depending on how long the journey to the priests was, they could have still been on their way. they could have still been on their way to show themselves to the priests to show that they were healed.

Or they could have already shown themselves to the priests to show that they were cleansed of leprosy and to be certified as having been cleansed of leprosy.

or perhaps they were happily reuniting and celebrating with their families and with their friends and with those from whom they had been separated and had no hope of ever being reunited again with. But we don't know. We don't know what they were doing. What we do know is they responded very differently to being cleansed from the Samaritan who returned and praised God and thanked Jesus falling on his face.

[21 : 40] The third question Jesus asks is in verse 18. Was no one found to return and to give praise to God except this foreigner.

This third question that Jesus asked in some ways is kind of interesting because one could say well they could give thanks and praise to God wherever they are.

You have to physically be in a particular place to give thanks or give praise to God. They could have done it right where they were. God but Jesus clearly was not accepting that particular response which is demonstrated by the question that he asked.

He expected them to do it in a particular way. He expected the others who were healed to return like this Samaritan and give thanks.

That's the clear implication of this third question that Jesus asks. So why didn't they? I suppose they didn't return to give thanks for some of the same reasons we at times are ungrateful.

[23 : 10] One reason is that we sometimes get so caught up with enjoying the gifts that we forget to show heartfelt gratitude to the giver of the gifts.

And James tells us in James 117 that every good and perfect gift is from above coming down from the father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

So we give thanks to God but ultimately we do that we should never neglect to give thanks to those whom God uses as channels for his gifts to us.

but if I were to offer to you what I think is perhaps the main reason that we don't show gratitude and that these nine who did not return to show gratitude why they didn't.

The reason I would offer is that we oftentimes have a sense of entitlement and our sense of entitlement blinds us to the need to be grateful.

[24 : 28] And I believe that that is really what comes out of this passage before us and let me try to explain it. When you read the gospel accounts what you see is that Jews felt a sense of entitlement to the blessings of God because of their connection to Abraham.

They felt they were the seed of Abraham and so blessings were theirs by right. On the other hand Samaritans did not take that same view.

Samaritans were outsiders they were half Jews they were despised by the Jews and they did not see themselves as having the same entitlements as Jews and no doubt this Samaritan man who returned to give thanks to Jesus saw himself like the Samaritan woman in Matthew 15 and like her he would have been satisfied with crumbs that fell from the master's table.

He was a foreigner he was an outsider. And I think we should all consider this morning who are we more like?

Are we more like the nine who received this incredible blessing and did not return to show gratitude or the one who did? We should consider if there is ingratitude in our lives because we feel entitled to the many mercies that we receive from God through people.

[26 : 20] Husbands are grateful to wives because they feel entitled to what their wives do for them. Wives are grateful to husbands because they feel entitled to what their husbands do for them.

I remember a few months after Alexi and I had gotten married. We both worked. We had no children and we would come home after a long day and after trekking through traffic and it took me a couple of months to realize that when we got home Alexi and I did different things. She would rhythmically go into the kitchen and start to prepare dinner. And I would rhythmically pick up the newspaper or do something else that really didn't help her or anything in the house. And it took me a couple of months to realize, got open my eyes to see that she was doing that. And I would come to learn to appreciate the many things that she does and that's more than just by observation, that's by demonstration as well because we not only communicate our gratitude in words, we demonstrate our gratitude by actions. And so I've learned to come alongside and to try to help and try to assist recognizing what she does and demonstrating gratitude for what she does.

[27 : 54] As I was preparing this sermon and I thought about this particular aspect of our lives for those of us who are married, where we don't show gratitude, I began to reflect on some of the marriage counseling I've done over the years and I've done quite a bit.

And sadly, some of those marriage counseling situations included physical abuse. marriages that I saw people in who I was trying to help were marriages that were harmed by words. and as I think of the words over the years that I've heard that have turned out to be the most hurtful words spoken between couples in particular when spoken by a woman to her husband is, you don't do anything for me. you never did anything for me. What do you do for me? And I have seen grown men broken by those words.

Because behind those words is an expression of ingratitude. because I believe there's something.

[29 : 39] And truthfully, though I didn't have all the details, I had enough to know that's a lie. That statement is not true. It is not true that he has never done anything for you.

It is not true he doesn't do anything for you. It isn't true that she doesn't do anything for you. And those words, they pierce.

Because they're filled with ingratitude. And sometimes it's a situation where perhaps a wife earns more than a husband does.

And so what she does is instead of accepting and ensuring gratitude and appreciation for what he contributes, though less, it's reduced to nothing.

It's minimized and that's ingratitude. That's ungratefulness. And it's one thing to not show gratitude.

[30 : 50] It's another thing to express that ingratitude in such graphic ways. And I've seen so many marriages harmed and hurt by that more than the physical abuse that's seen over the years.

And one doesn't justify the other. Both are inappropriate in the context of marriage. And what about you children? Are you grateful for what your parents do?

Or do you believe that you're entitled to it because they brought you into this world and you didn't ask to come into this world? as I've said to our children many times over the years, we don't owe you anything.

And life doesn't owe you anything. And be grateful for what you have. Don't have a sense of entitlement. I'm entitled to this. I'm entitled to that.

And likewise, parents, we should show gratitude to our children when they do things like helping with tasks around the house. Whether we ask them to do it or not, we should do that.

[32 : 17] You know, one of the things I've observed, I've seen and heard this in different working contexts. I've seen employees who have the view that because they work for their pay, they don't have to say thanks for it.

I've literally heard people say that. That's ungrateful. That is ungrateful. You're being provided a job. You're being provided a job, especially if it's a person who owns a small business and is taking some risk. Be grateful that that person is doing that. And even though you worked your full days week for what you would consider your full days pay, gratitude in your heart is an important thing. It is a wonderful thing. It is a gracious thing. And same thing employers. To show gratitude, to be grateful for the work that employees do.

Because when we have a sense of entitlement, it destroys gratitude. And so I want to ask us this morning, men, husbands, when was the last time you thanked your wife and demonstrated

gratitude to her for what she does?

[33 : 43] and wives towards your husbands. And children towards your parents and parents towards your children and employers towards employees and vice versa.

When's the last time you thanked volunteers in this church who serve week in, week out? have you ever done so?

Have you ever been helped by a sermon, encouraged in some way? Have you taken the time to express gratitude to the one who preached it?

And here, I'm not primarily thinking about myself. From time to time, we have other men in this congregation who stand before you and preach God's word.

And one example was last week when Lyndon preached. As one who does this almost every week, I know fully well the effort, the labor, the sacrifice, sometimes the discouragement in preparing that you think it's nothing and yet you obey God's voice to do that.

[35 : 15] I know what is involved in that. And I also know that those who do it less frequently, it's even harder. And so when some of the other men from time to time stand before you and bring God's word, that's more difficult than me doing it every single week as I do it.

because by God's grace over time, it isn't as difficult and God provides grace to help you to grow. And I know how easy it is to criticize a sermon.

That's the easiest thing to do because no sermon is perfect. Only God's word is perfect. But you know what? If we have hearts that are bent towards gratitude, we'll find things that we can commend in a sermon to say, I appreciated this, I benefited from this, even if it's ever so brief.

And this isn't just for those who preach in this congregation, it is even when we have guests come among us to show gratitude, to thank them for the evident labors that went into preparing to bring God's word.

we are called to be grateful people. And when I think of being grateful, I'm thinking not just with our lips, but also with our lives.

[36 : 48] We're demonstrating it. This man, when he came back to Jesus to show Jesus he was grateful, he didn't come and shake Jesus' hand and say, you know, I really appreciate you healing me.

He demonstrated the extent to which he valued the healing. He fell on his face before Jesus and thanked him.

But it's very easy when we look at this account to think that Luke's primary purpose for including it in his gospel is to teach us to be grateful.

but that's not Luke's primary purpose. Luke's primary purpose for including this in his gospel is to help us to see that God is merciful even to the ungrateful.

people. Jesus makes a similar point in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 45 when he says that God makes his sun to shine on the evil and on the good.

[38 : 01] He sends rain on the just and on the unjust. In Romans 2, 4 the Apostle Paul says, talking about God's mercy, he says that it is, he says, oh, do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

That's the purpose of the kindness that God brings to us. That was the purpose of the kindness that was extended to these ten lepers. It was to help them to see the mercy of God and to bring them back to the one who showed them that mercy that they may receive even greater mercy as this Samaritan received.

Look at what it says in verse 19. He said to him, rise and go your way, your faith has made you well. There's a lot of debate about this verse and what it actually is portraying because some are saying, well, this happened to all the lepers.

But I don't think so. I don't think so. Yes, they were all healed. But Jesus is actually communicating something else to this man.

And for those of you who have the English Standard version, you'll see a footnote number nine and it actually, another rendering would be, rise and go your way, your faith has saved you.

[39 : 41] Not healed you, but saved you. This man, in response to the kindness of God in healing, returned and the implication is that he placed faith in Jesus.

And see, this is what is supposed to happen to us in life. as we experience the many gifts of God, the goodness of God coming to us. Because in a strict sense, we're all lepers.

In a strict sense, we are all lepers in need of God's mercy and God is kindly giving us common grace. He is kindly showering us with the goodness of his reign and his many gifts. Though we would be ungrateful, though we don't deserve them. and the whole intent is to point us back to him, to point us to his kindness, that we may receive the greater gift than the common grace of God, which is the specific grace of God that will lead us to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Christ. The Samaritan man is a picture of what gratitude for God's mercy should result in, what it should look like.

[41 : 11] It should result in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. And interestingly, this is a side point, one of the things that those who were cleansed of leprosy were supposed to do was to go to the temple and to offer sacrifices.

And in a sense, what we see the Samaritan doing is coming and recognizing Jesus as the new temple, temple, as the true temple, as he would come and he would worship the new temple of God.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord is good to all. He is good to the evil and to the good, the wicked, and the righteous.

And likewise, he calls us to do the same. You know, if we were only grateful, if we were only gracious and merciful to those who show gratitude, we wouldn't show much mercy or much grace. We wouldn't. But God is merciful to all, including the ungrateful. And he calls us to do the same.

[42 : 48] And that was the point that Jesus made in the Sermon on the Mount. He says, you be like your heavenly father, who is good to all, the evil and to the just.

God is God. And so my prayer for us this morning is that the Lord would help us to see ourselves as undeserving spiritual lepers who are grateful for the mercies of God that come our way in this fallen world.

And may we see God as the ultimate example and expression of what it means to be merciful even to the ungrateful.

Let's pray together. Thank you.