

# A Lesson in Gratitude

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 13 January 2008

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[ 0 : 01 ] Let us turn a little to the chapter that we read in the Gospel of Luke, Luke chapter 17. And it's at verse 18 that I want us to focus on, the question that Jesus asks.

Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? Now as we know that question that Jesus asks comes out of the incident that we have recorded here for us of the healing of the ten lepers.

I suppose a question we all have to ask ourselves is that as we journey through life, do we find, if we were to stop and think, that we kind of just accept life as it is?

Because now and again maybe we give God thanks, but as we look at life by and large, it's a picture of really just taking, accepting, going along with what we have and what we are, and now and again giving God thanks.

Do we find that a spirit of gratitude and thankfulness is a real part of our life? That we find that we are constantly thanking God?

[ 1 : 26 ] We might waken in the night and we find ourselves thanking God. That when we waken in the morning we are thanking God. That during the day on many different occasions we find ourselves thanking God.

That throughout even our evenings and nights we find ourselves thanking God. Which category do you fall into? Because Jesus is showing here that actually ingratitude is a sin.

We'll come to look at that just in a moment. We may not look at it as much of a sin. It actually is a great sin. And that is why Jesus is asking a very probing and a question that no doubt is paining his own heart.

And he's saying, where are the nine? Because Jesus is aware that there is only one person who found it in his heart to come back and to thank Jesus for the healing, for the cleansing, for what he did.

Now, as we said, this question or this statement of Jesus comes out of this incident of the cleansing, the healing of the ten lepers.

[ 2 : 43 ] Now, I remember a few years ago looking at this passage, but looking at it specifically in light of the great parallel between leprosy and sin. And looking at how the disease of leprosy was so similar to the disease of sin.

So I don't particularly want to look at that today. Just, first of all, a wee bit by way of background to look at this in order to focus on what is being stated here by the Lord Jesus.

Now, as we know, leprosy was a dreaded disease of the day. And there were some leprosies, of course, that were completely destructive and killed people.

There were other leprosies that could be cleansed and healed. And, of course, when a person was healed, he had to go to the priest in order to get a certificate from the priest.

And the priest would pronounce the person cleansed or healed. But when you became a leper in those days, it was an awful thing because it brought you into a state of isolation.

[ 3 : 50 ] If I was hit with leprosy, going back in these days, I would have to leave home. I would have to go and live on my own or live with other lepers.

I couldn't come home because the leprosy was so infectious, so contagious. And, in fact, if I came close to people, I had to shout and to warn them that I was a leper.

So you can imagine the trauma in a home when somebody developed leprosy, where they had to leave home. And you can see the great breaking up in homes and families when someone with leprosy had to leave the home.

And I suppose that's why, even to this day, we still use the expression, is still in common use when somebody is ostracized, when somebody is excluded, when somebody is put out and kept from,

when somebody is removed to the outside.

People say that he was or she was treated like a leper. This idea of somebody who is on the outside. Well, anyway, here we read about, as Jesus enters this village, as he's on his way between Samaria and Galilee, he enters this village.

[ 5 : 07 ] And he meets these ten lepers. And I believe that these lepers, because they cried to the Lord, I believe that these lepers had heard about Jesus. And that's the reason why we find that, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

You see, these ten lepers had heard about Jesus. And that's why they stopped, took call to Jesus. They stood at a distance. They couldn't come close. But they stood at a distance.

And they said, they made this cry, this call. And they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And you know, there's nothing that drives us to prayer like real need.

We can go through the motions of prayer. Suppose if I was to ask you today, and maybe you don't know, but maybe you do know.

How have you prayed already today? Did you pray today? Or was it just a very quick, just a few quick words to the Lord?

[ 6 : 13 ] Or did you maybe pray for a few minutes? And afterwards, you'd have to be honest and say, I have no idea what I prayed for or what I prayed about.

In other words, you just went through the motions of prayer. There might be others in here, and you know what you prayed for. Because prayer was real.

It was urgent. Because there were burdens. There were issues. There were pains. There were sorrows. There were different things. There was something to believe. And that drew, you were driven to the Lord by it.

It really was something. And there's nothing like trouble for driving us to the Lord for real prayer. And that's what we find with these men here. That they came, and there was an urgency about them.

They weren't playing games. There was a real sincerity. So these lepers knew they had a need. And of course, that's one of the things that really drives us to prayer, is an awareness of a need.

[ 7 : 17 ] That's when a person begins seeking the Lord. It is because of a sense of need that drives them to the Lord, asking the Lord for mercy and forgiveness.

You might be here, and you might be finding that you're going to the Lord in a way you never used to go to the Lord. And that there is a real, you're meaning it.

You go to the Lord, and you're saying, Lord, you know, I want to be saved. Because you have become aware that salvation is unnecessary. That there is a real need in your heart.

And that only Jesus can meet that need. You see, beforehand, it's possible for people to sit under the gospel and say, yep, I agree with that.

And one day I'll sort and deal with that. People who sit under the gospel, none of them, I believe, want to go to a lost eternity. Everybody who sits, I believe, under the gospel will entertain the hope of it being right at the end of the day and going to heaven with the Lord.

[ 8 : 22 ] But often people can sit under the gospel and they're believing these things at a level, but they're not doing anything about it. But you know, when we become aware of a need, and all of a sudden our sin is there before us, and we realize that actually we're condemned before God.

There is all of a sudden a totally different type of prayer. And people are saying, Lord, have mercy on me. I need salvation. I need to make it right with God. So there's nothing, as we say, like a need for driving us to the Lord.

And so we find that Jesus hears and answers and deals with the cry of these lepers. And my friend, in here today, he will hear and answer and deal with your needs as well.

He doesn't always deal immediately, but he will. When we come to the Lord by faith, and when we cry to the Lord, he will answer.

The Lord will never turn away from the soul that genuinely is seeking, and the soul that is genuinely kind to him. And if you're looking today for God's help, his forgiveness, his grace, his strength, he will give that to you.

[ 9 : 42 ] Be quite persuaded of him. Anyway, we find that Jesus stops and he listens to the appeal of these lepers. And then he says to them, when he saw them, he said to them, go and show yourselves to the priests.

Jesus didn't touch them and command the leprosy to go away. He didn't tell them to go home and take some medicine. He didn't, as it were, do anything miraculous around them.

He just said to them, only go and show yourselves to the priests. Now, as we said, it was only when the leper was healed and cleansed that he went to the priest in order to get the certificate of cleansing.

So what Jesus was asking these people to do was really quite an extraordinary thing. And the response of the lepers is really a great response of faith.

Because they took Jesus at his word. There they were, defiled, sinners. There they were, leprous.

[10:44] Nobody could go near them. And yet they're going to do something that reason and logic would say is mad. Because reason and logic would say, well, here I am as a leper.

And I'm being told to go to the priest. The priest is going to tell me to get out. And not to come back until I have been cleansed and healed. But here I am as a leper. And I've been told to go to the priest.

So you see, the faith of these men, they took Jesus at his word. And they turned and away they went. And they made their way to the priest. And you know it's as they were going. They were cleansed.

They were healed. Their faith, their step of faith, their response to the word of Jesus was such that as they went, the healing took place.

And that's very important to underline because it shows us that if they had actually just stayed where they were, and if they had reasoned it out and said, well, there's no point in just going.

[11:46] He's got to do something for us. He's got to anoint us with something. He must have some secret medicine stashed away. He must. There's no point in just going. But they didn't reason or argue that way.

They just went. And my dear friends, it's the same with salvation. Because you know salvation, the salvation of Jesus Christ is for some people a stumbling block and for other people's foolishness. Because people begin to try and work it out logically and they say to themselves, oh well. The Bible says, him that cometh unto me I will no wise cast out. So does that mean that I've just got to come to Jesus and I'll be saved?

But then people say, there's got to be more to it than that. I've got to do something myself. And as long as people are applying their own reason and logic to things, and as long as people are not going to Christ by faith, they will not be saved.

And you see, that's why, that's what Jesus is saying. Take me at my word. Come to me. And so we find that as the lepers went on their way, they discovered this healing had taken place.

[13:04] And then one of the lepers, he sees something wonderful. The others carry on. But this leper comes back. And I love the consistency of this leper.

Because, you know, just as he cried to Jesus in the first place, along with the other nine, Lord, have mercy on us. They cried for healing. We find him being absolutely consistent.

He comes straight back. And he falls down again before Jesus. And he, it tells us here in verse 16, And he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks.

He came back to this. He couldn't even wait to go to the priest. As he was walking along there, they all looked at him. There was the awful disease of lepers.

It's gone. Their skin was just brand new, as it were. Just like how it would be before that awful disease came. And they said, I'm clean. I'm healed. Obviously, the other nine carried on and made their way to the priest.

[14:10] But this Samaritan, he turned back. He couldn't wait to get back to Jesus. And he throws himself down at Jesus. He says, oh, he's saying, Jesus, thank you. Thank you for healing me and for cleansing me.

And as we see, this man actually was a Samaritan. And remember, the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritan. And Jesus doesn't miss the opportunity of highlighting that to the other people, that this man was a Samaritan.

And so as this man was healed, the lesson that he gives to us is the important lesson of gratitude. Because Jesus asks, where are the nine?

Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? Obviously, the other lepers were Jews.

And Jesus is saying, where are they? Where are they? I'm waiting for them. I'm waiting for their thanksgiving. I'm waiting for the response of gratitude.

[15:17] And not one of them has come back except this foreigner. He's come back to thank me. Let us guard against the great sin of ingratitude.

Because, you know, ingratitude, it produces laziness. It produces apathy. I believe there was, to a certain extent, there was both laziness and apathy in those who had been healed.

In other words, they saw the healing and they said, great. And they just carried on. I wonder how often we do that in life. When God does good things to us and for us, do we just say, oh, that's great, and just carry on?

Or do we actually stop? You think of the number of times you prayed to the Lord over a specific issue. And God has answered.

Maybe not altogether the way you asked, but he has answered. And there have been times God has delivered you, times God has helped you, times God has provided for you, and given to you.

[16:24] Have you gone back to him, right away and said, Lord, oh, thank you. Or has it just been a wee kind of token, oh, thanks Lord. That's not the kind of thanks he wants.

It's this kind of thanks that takes time to thank. It's a kind of thanksgiving. That's sacrificial. In Psalm 107, it talks about the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

This leper put himself out. He was delaying getting the certificate. He had to, I don't know how far they had walked. Maybe it was a mile on the road before.

Well, he had to, I don't think that they had just like gone from here to the distance of the church.

Otherwise, Jesus wouldn't be asking where are the nine. They were obviously way out of view.

Maybe they had gone a mile. Maybe they had to walk a few miles. But wherever the healing was discovered, that leper made its way straight back. And as I say, that would probably have, it cost him time and effort and all the rest, but he was willing to pay it because he had a heart full of thanksgiving.

[17:36] And my dear friends, in gratitude, our sense of God, we're missing out in the right way of life. You know, I think it must be one of the worst things is when we come to the end of our days and look back and say, you know what?

I've wasted my time. I've wasted my time. I've actually heard quite a few people say that as they look back on their life. And they've looked back at opportunities and doors they're aware that they should have gone through, but didn't.

You see, there's a version of Scripture telling us to redeem the time. Satan wants to rob us of our time. God has given us all abilities.

He's given us all gifts. And God requires us to use these things for him in this world. Are you? Am I? Are we using the abilities and gifts that God has given us for himself?

And that doesn't mean that every person will have to say, oh well, I'll have to give up my job and go into the full-time mission or something like that. No. Wherever we are, God sets us all in different places.

[18:52] But where we are, that we use our abilities and time and talent in seeking to glorify God, in seeking to serve him where we're at. That includes working honestly, working diligently.

These things, these are glorified. All that is involved. We're not going to spend time today looking at that. But it's showing all these things where there's good, honest endeavor and labor.

All these things are involved in seeking to glorify and honor God in our service where we are. But you see, if we have a heart of ingratitude, we become lazy, we lose our sense of vision because we lose our sense of God.

When a person is thanking the Lord and praising God, they are glorifying God. The Lord tells us that whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.

And if we're seeking to praise God, then God is lifted up in our vision. He's exhausted in our vision. And that means that we'll have a God-centered awareness as we go through life.

[20:12] Are we working today for the Lord? You know, you often or sometimes I should say hear people say, I'm bored. Shouldn't be.

Busy people are never bored. It's idle people who are bored. It's people who are sitting down.

People sometimes, sometimes you hear children who are surrounded with so many options of things to do.

But you see, they're kind of sitting and they're saying, I'm bored. But if people are busy, they're never bored. Sometimes if you're busy, things can become a burden. You can become tired. That's a different thing. Never bored when you're busy. And I believe that's part of the whole problem today. But there's a very serious note about it all.

Where God places ingratitude. have you thought that ingratitude, lack of thankfulness before God is a serious sin?

[ 21 : 17 ] Well, it is. It's incredibly serious. In Luke chapter 6, when Jesus is telling us to love our enemies and to do good to those, he finishes what he's saying there, Jesus said, to love our enemies and do good and you will be sons of the Most High.

For he is kind, this is what God is, he is kind to the ungrateful and evil. Two categories listed side by side.

The ungrateful and evil. That's what Jesus tells us. You know, when I saw that, it really, you know how often when you come to the Bible and you begin to read and you're coming across and you say, I never saw that.

I never took note of how serious a sin ingratitude is. The Lord sits it right beside evil.

Now when we think of evil, we think of that which is vile, demonic, awful, and that's where the Lord is placing ingratitude.

[ 22 : 31 ] sin. So it's little wonder that Jesus is asking, where are the nine? And that is why we must examine our own lives because we are, we're wonderful at categorizing sin.

And we have a, as it were, almost like a top ten of sin. And we say, oh, that's sin there up there and way down here, oh, that's not so bad. And I am sure that if somebody said, where will we list ingratitude in a list of sins, it would be war for them.

That's not a big sin. The Lord puts it beside evil. That's how serious it is. That's why we must examine our lives and ask the Lord to forgive us if that spirit of ingratitude is there.

Because you see, as we said earlier, in gratitude, there's lack of thankfulness before God. As we said, it produces laziness, it takes our vision away from God, and it's the beginning of a downward spiral, and I think one of the most serious parts, you find that, for instance, in Romans chapter 1. And the latter part of Romans chapter 1 is well known because it's a chapter that highlights where man goes completely wrong and slips and slides in a downward spiral into every kind of debauchery, into everything.

[ 24 : 00 ] How did it begin? Well, this is how it began. We read there, because that, this is how all this downward spiral began, because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.

See? Ingratitude. That's where it began. Because they knew God, but they didn't glorify him as God, neither were they thankful.

And because of this spirit of ingratitude, it developed, it grew, and then it went. In the end, they began worshipping the created rather than the creator, and away it went. So, my dear friends, we see today the importance of having this spirit of thankfulness and gratitude in our heart.

There is so much to thank God for. If today you're here as a Christian, you should never stop thanking and praising God, because it's what you're going to do throughout an endless eternity. If you're here today and you have to say with your hand in your heart, you know, I don't believe that I've come to faith in Jesus Christ, I would say to you, still, you have a lot to thank the Lord for.

[ 25 : 22 ] You have a lot to thank the Lord for that you're here today under the gospel. So many people have chosen not to be. So many people have deliberately decided not to thank God, not to glorify God, and have chosen to worship the created rather than the creator.

But today, you have come to worship the creator. Thank the Lord that that has been put in your heart. Thank the Lord that you're in his house.

Thank the Lord that you're under his word. Thank the Lord that you know this gospel and that you have heard the way of salvation. But don't stop there. Ask the Lord that he will come into your heart in order that you will be able to truly thank him and to learn how to thank him and that you will be amongst those who will be thanking him and praising him throughout an endless eternity.

Let us praise and thank God for his grace, his mercy, his pardon, his peace, his love, his goodness, his wisdom, all these things that so fill our lives.

Let us all pray that we will have this spirit of gratitude and thanksgiving in our heart. Let us pray. Oh Lord, our God, we ask thee to open our hearts and minds today in order to understand this truth.

[ 26 : 54 ] That we so often come to new areas and places where we find that we are guilty of maybe things that we weren't as aware of. we know of sins of commission but so often there are sins of omission and we know that ingratitude comes into the sins of omission and we pray then, Lord, that we might indeed receive thy forgiveness if we are guilty in this line and that we might seek to have and that we pray, Lord, that thou wilt foster within us and develop within us a spirit of genuine thanksgiving and praise.

Bless us all together, take us all home safely, lift us up, we pray, have mercy on us, cleanse us from our every sin. In Jesus' name we ask God. Amen.