

Thanksgiving - Ten Healed But Only One Gave Thanks

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Date: 29 November 2020

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] Good evening and a very warm welcome to our service from Stornoway Free Church. We're pleased that you've joined us and we trust that together we'll know the Lord's blessing as we gather together in this way to worship him.

I have a couple of announcements, first of all, before we begin the worship for folks belonging to the congregation especially. But first of all, it's regarding the Salvation Army appeal, which we're supporting, to say that the hall will be open tomorrow from 9am to 5pm.

And the appeal is for Christmas treats for families. You can appreciate how difficult it is for some families at this time especially with the restrictions and how many have been reduced indeed to depend on food banks and so on through the deprivations that restrictions have imposed, loss of work and so on.

So it's for Christmas treats for families. That's tins and boxes of sweets, family board games, toys, stuff like that.

If you can provide these, they'll be welcome. That's tomorrow. The hall is open 9am to 5pm. And secondly, also a reminder to those who are using envelopes that these will be collected.

[1 : 19] There'll be a collection especially for the freewill offering envelopes on the 4th and the 5th of December. So the change, the first of these dates, not the second, it's actually the 4th and the 5th of December and the hall is going to be open again from 2 o'clock to 4pm, 2 to 4pm.

And also it's possible to pick up next year's envelopes for those who would be using that to pick up next year's envelopes because they will not be distributed this year due to the COVID restrictions from house to house as in the past.

So that's on the 4th and 5th, Friday and Saturday from 2 to 4. Now we're going to begin our worship tonight by singing Psalm 106.

Psalm 106 in Scottish Psalter, that's on page 378 of the Psalm books. And we're singing verses 1 to 5 to the tune of St. Paul. Give praise and thanks unto the Lord, for bountiful is he.

His tender mercy doth endure unto eternity. God's mighty works who can express or show forth all his praise. Blessed are they that judgment keep and justly do always.

[2 : 32] Psalm 106 and verses 1 to 5. Give praise and thanks unto the Lord, God's mighty works who can express or show forth all his praise.

Blessed are they that judgment keep and justly do always.

Remember me, Lord, with that love which thou to thine dost bear.

With thy salvation, O my God, to visit me, draw near.

That I thy chosen's good may see, and in their joy rejoice.

[4 : 13] And may with thine inheritance triumph with cheerful voice.

Our first reading tonight is from 1 Chronicles chapter 16. The first book of the Chronicles in chapter 16, verses 7 to 36.

This chapter is at the time when David and his helpers brought back the ark of God to set it inside the tent that David had set up for it.

So from verse 7 in 1 Chronicles 16. Then on that day, David first appointed that thanksgiving be sung to the Lord by Asaph and his brothers.

O give thanks to the Lord. O give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name. Make known his deeds among the peoples. Sing to him. Sing praises to him. Tell of all his wondrous works.

[5 : 19] Glory in his holy name. Let the heart of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Seek the Lord and his strength. Seek his presence continually. Remember the wondrous works that he has done.

His miracles and the judgments he uttered. O offspring of Israel, his servant. Sons of Jacob, his chosen ones. He is the Lord our God.

His judgments are in all the earth. Remember his covenant forever. The word that he commanded for a thousand generations. The covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, which he confirmed as a statute to Jacob, as an everlasting covenant to Israel, saying, To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance.

When you were few in number and of little account and sojourners in it, wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people, he allowed no one to oppress them.

He rebuked kings on their account, saying, Touch not my anointed ones. Do my prophets no harm. Sing to the Lord all the earth. Tell of his salvation from day to day.

[6 : 31] Declare his glory among the nations. His marvellous works among all the peoples. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised. And he is to be held in awe above all gods.

For all the gods of the peoples are idols. But the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him. Strength and joy are in his place. Ascribe to the Lord, O clans of all the peoples.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name. Bring an offering and come before him. Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.

Tremble before him, all the earth. Yes, the world is established. It shall never be moved. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice. And let them say among the nations, The Lord reigns.

Let the sea roar and all that fills it. Let the field exult and everything in it. Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord. For he comes to judge the earth.

[7 : 37] O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. For his steadfast love endures forever. Say also, save us, O God, of our salvation. And gather and deliver us from among the nations.

That we may give thanks to your holy name. And glory in your praise. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, From everlasting to everlasting. Then all the people said, Amen.

And praised the Lord. Once again, we pray for God to bless this portion of his word to us. Now let's join together in prayer. Let's call upon the God we've been reading about.

Call upon him in prayer. Lord our God, we give thanks for this opportunity of coming before you and drawing near to you, and seeking that you would draw near to us as we do so.

We thank you that everything we have read already in your word tonight is true about you, and makes you worthy to be thanked and praised at all times.

[8 : 43] We come before you on this day that we have designated as a day of thanksgiving, yet conscious, O Lord, that you are worthy of our thanks and requires thanks from us every day we live.

And truly, Lord, our heart rejoices in the provision that you have made for us, for which we give you thanks, for your ongoing bounty and grace extended to us, for the many ways in which our life is blessed by you.

O Lord, at times, as we confess, we tend to focus on the negative things that take place in your providence. We tend to focus on those things that bring us to sometimes find pain and obstructions in our lives, for which we feel aggrieved.

Yet, Lord, we give thanks that you have not placed us in a way that cannot approach you, that you have not cast us away from you, indeed that you continue to provide for us so abundantly through the gospel and through your providence.

Lord, we acknowledge tonight that you are God, that your glorious attributes remain the same as they have always been from all eternity, uncreated and unchanging.

[10 : 00] And this is, Lord, the basis of our confidence, the basis of our trust that you are that God, that you have given us the privilege of trusting in you. Lord, we come to you tonight and confess our sins.

And as we come with thanksgiving, we are very conscious that one of our sins is a failure to give you the thanks that is due to your name in the manner and to the extent that we should.

Forgive us, Lord, for our unthankfulness. Forgive us for how used we are to the blessings that you bring to us each day so that we fail to reckon with them as a wondrous provision.

Forgive us, we pray, when we forget to give you thanks, even when it is obvious to us that you have blessed us and that you continue to bless us. We give thanks for your many promises toward all who trust in you.

And we pray, O Lord, as David did long ago, as they celebrated taking the ark to its resting place. We pray, O Lord, that we too may celebrate the fact that we have a resting place for the presence

of God in our hearts and that we have especially God's resting place for us in the Lord Jesus Christ. [11:14] We give thanks, O Lord, for him tonight. We give thanks for the way that you have entered into this world in the person of your Son. We give thanks for all that has been accomplished in him and by him and through him.

And we give thanks that you bring him before us in your word as that ready saviour, mighty to save us. A saviour who is constantly appealing to us through his own gospel to come to him and find our rest in him.

We pray, Lord, tonight that we may all know of that for ourselves. And as we once again turn to your word and as we consider its teaching on thankfulness and on giving thanks, we pray that you would bless it to us by your Holy Spirit.

And we pray, O Lord, that the truth of your word might be laid upon our hearts. That we may once again bow to its authority and your authority in it.

That we may rejoice in the wonderful emphasis in it on life for sinners such as we are. The life that our saviour has died to achieve for us.

[12:25] And we thank you for that eternal life which resides in him and in the way in which he comes to bring it to us in the gospel and apply it to us by his spirit.

Bless tonight, we pray, all who are anxious, all those hearts that are heavy and despondent, those who have troubles, O Lord, that they feel they cannot readily share with others.

help them to unfold their hearts to you, who understands all our difficulties, who has been tempted in every way like as we are, yet without sin on your part.

We thank you, Lord, that we can bring all before you that we know and even those we don't know and yet hear about in their need and in their plight. we recognise throughout the world tonight, O Lord, that there are many, many troubled families and individuals, not only in regard to this pandemic, but other conditions that prevail in the lives of men and women and children and communities and nations throughout the world.

Blight and poverty and violence and war and persecution and all that causes refugeeship throughout the world. Gracious One, our world is so blighted by these things and we pray that you would bring relief, that you would bring the truth of the Gospel especially.

[13:51] We also seek material welfare so that those who are blighted with poverty may be uplifted above their present station. Gracious One, we ask that you would grant to us the continued well-being that we seek for ourselves and for our people.

Bless our families, our homes, our children, our grandchildren. Bless us in our communities as we give thanks for your protective care for so many thus far.

Bless those who are ill with COVID-19 at the moment and bless our hospitals for which we give thanks and our care homes who also show such great work in looking after those who are ill or those who need care coming to the latter years of life.

Bless, we pray, all who work in these places and protect them and grant that their work, Lord, may be blessed to those that they care for. We ask, Lord, for those with mental health issues, for those who have lost work, for the many people whose prospect over this time of year has been dimmed so much and marred so much by loss of income and loss of work.

Lord, we pray that you would provide for them and help us as we seek to help those in need that we will do so liberally out of the abundance that you have given us.

[15:16] We pray that you would grant your blessing to us as a people and again we pray for those who rule over us, those in government, those in places of importance and authority in our land.

Bless us, we pray, and give us that we may see days of prosperity ahead. We thank you for the prospect of a vaccine and we pray that it will soon be available so that it will be rolled out to all of us in our nation and throughout the world.

Graciously, Lord, bless us now. Hear us in this prayer. Continue to bless us and watch over us and pardon our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, children, tonight we're looking at another of the I Am sayings of Jesus and this time we're looking at Jesus in John chapter 14 saying that he is the way, the truth, and the life.

That's in John chapter 14 and verse 6. Thomas said to Jesus, Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. You children are not old enough yet to remember back to the time when sat-nav wasn't available in cars like it is now almost if not all cars nowadays.

[16 : 43] You have satellite navigation so that the route that you're taking is worked out for you and you just follow the sat-nav as it takes you to where you want to go, hopefully, mostly at least.

But I remember back when I started driving, first of all, and if we were going to a place that we weren't sure of or the road had never been travelled before by us, you'd have to take roadmaps. Sometimes these were fairly large books. I was looking in my study in case I had some left over but I don't have. I must have chucked them all out once the sat-nav came along. But these books you used to study beforehand.

Very often somebody in the passenger seat would actually be reading the map and giving you instructions as you went along as to where to turn and what road to take and the name of the road and so on.

It was pretty laborious. It was something that you really needed a lot of work to do in advance and also while you were actually driving somebody telling you. So these books were, these roadmaps were important.

[17 : 43] They helped you to work out where you were going. But nowadays of course you have, as I said you have sat-nav and once it's programmed and set up and as long as it's up to date it will take you in the road that you want to take and in fact it'll actually, if there are some delays in the journey in the road that you've chosen it'll actually inform you and tell you that there's a blockage up ahead that there's a huge queue of traffic if there's been an accident so it'll actually advise you to take another road and show you which way to go there.

So it's a wonderful invention and something that really, really helps us when we're driving. Now it's even more important spiritually to know the way that we must live and walk spiritually between life in this world and eternity.

That way is important for us to know and Jesus has marked it out for us because he is saying I am the way. He's talking here about going back to the Father to heaven where he came from into this world and once his work was done in this world he was going back to heaven he was going back to the Father and that's what he was saying to the disciples here and he was going away to prepare a place for them this place of many rooms and Thomas said to him Lord we don't know where you're going how can we know the way and he said I am the way the truth and the life it's important to know that the directions we have for life are accurate that you can depend on them that they will not take you in the wrong direction and when Jesus is the way that you follow when you trust in him when you give your life over to him in other words when he becomes the driver of your life think of yourself as a car heading in one direction he is the driver if he's in the control seat then your life is being directed by him through his word through his holy spirit and that's such an important thing for all of us to know and here he is saying

I am the way the truth and the life when Jesus is the way that we follow then we know that that way is dependable it's a way that's not going to take us away from the proper route the road that leads to heaven but he's not just saying I am the way that leads to the father he's saying also I am the truth I am the way the truth and the life sometimes even sat-navs can go wrong if you haven't punched in the right directions it'll follow the wrong road and you will actually end up somewhere where you don't want to be and when you come to spiritual life it's so important not only that we know Jesus is the way but he's also the truth there are no lies with Jesus he is himself the truth everything that Jesus says you can believe everything that

Jesus tells you you can trust in him that it's true and that it will not put your life wrong at any stage and that's important along with knowing the way that Jesus himself is the way it's important to know that he's never going to change his mind about that he's never going to suddenly say oh I'm sorry I was actually wrong about this so here's a redirection for your life it's never ever like that with Jesus he is the way and he is the truth and he is the life the three things are fitted closely together I am the way the truth and the life the life that we need the spiritual life we get it from Jesus he is the source of that life that's why so often the Bible makes a picture of spiritual life as a river and in the last book of the Bible you'll find the chapter of the river of life and that teaches us that the spiritual life we need comes to us from

[21 : 59] God we don't create it ourselves we can't do that we don't have to do that God has it for us and it flows to us from the throne of God through Jesus who is himself the way the truth and the life and so today if you have your trust in Jesus as I hope you have you will know Jesus as a dependable and safe way as one that you can safely trust and follow and one that will take you without fail to heaven to be with the Father and you know what he's saying I am the way the truth

and the life no one comes to the Father except through me he is the only way he's the safe way and as you follow him you're following all the way through to eternal life in heaven now let's say the Lord's prayer together once again our Father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil the kingdom and the power and the glory forever amen now we're going to read again a short reading from the gospel of luke the gospel of luke chapter 17 and verses 11 to 19 on the way to Jerusalem on the way to Jerusalem Jesus was passing along between Samaria and Galilee and as he entered a village he was met by ten lepers who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices saying Jesus master have mercy on us when he saw them

God accept this and he said to him rise and go your way your faith has made you well well well Jesus never left his disciples in any doubt about the Christian life and what it was about and while he mentioned many many things that would comfort them in their Christian lives he also set out many challenges for them you'll find that in this chapter as well in verse 3 for example he's saying pay attention to yourselves pay attention to yourselves if your brother sins rebuke him and if he repents forgive him and if he sins against you seven times in the day and turns to you seven times saying I repent you must forgive him what a challenge what a challenge that was as the disciples listened to this so much so that their immediate response was as verse 5 has it the apostle said to the Lord increase our faith that's how it must be that's how it must be for you and for me as well whenever we're facing the demands that God makes upon us and even when we're facing the blessings that he pours into our lives for which we give thanks we always have to seek further increase of our faith because our faith is something that requires to be increasing all the time sometimes we complain that our faith is not increasing and it may seem that that is how it is to us and indeed that may be the case but when we're faced especially with difficulties and challenges and when we're faced with the promises of God and we need to take them into our lives and put them into action whether our cup is as we look at it a cup of God's providence as we see it as nearly empty or when it's running over and overflowing with blessing our response should always be Lord increase my faith give my faith to grow so that I will deal with the situation properly and to your glory but even the greatest faith even the person with the greatest faith tonight in the world cannot say about that faith that it's meritorious that it's something that deserves that God will actually give you a blessing because of it that's what you take into verses 7 to 10 here where he talks here about a servant plowing or keeping sheep and Jesus' emphasis here is in verse 9 does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded see you also when you have done all that you were commanded say we are unworthy or unprofitable servants we have only done what was our duty again we bring that with us into the emphasis of our lives as well our faith can never be meritorious however much it draws as it does from God the grace and the power that we require the blessings that we require it's never the case that our faith itself is the reason why God blesses us that is his grace and his grace in Christ is the source of that and so all of that is fed then into this passage from verse 11 through to verse 19 where he has this where they have this incident where Jesus met with these 10 lepers now our theme today because this is Thanksgiving time of year the theme of today is Thanksgiving and as we're looking here at the main emphasis in verses 17 and 18 that is the main emphasis of Thanksgiving but the question of Jesus is where are the nine as well as this one that was blessed where are the others they all received the same blessing they all received the same benefit they were all cleansed from their leprosy yet only one of them came back one out of ten came back from the goodness that God had shown them to give thanks came back to Jesus to give thanks that's why Jesus has this powerful question was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner it's very deliberate in the passage that this one who came back is the one that you would least expect to come back he was a Samaritan the Jews looked down on the Samaritans they were not at all of the same level in their estimation as the Jewish people themselves yet here so often in the Bible you find Samaritans doing things which Pharisees and the scribes refused themselves to do in obedience to Jesus so here we're coming to Thanksgiving in this passage we're coming to it as it were from the angle of its absence as well as from its presence in this one who came back to give thanks now there are a number of things in the passage that are very significant along the way towards its climax and these final verses 17 and 18 first of all there is the leper's cry the cry of these ten lepers who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices saying Jesus Master have mercy on us probably just one of them crying out on behalf of the rest but they

were all involved in that crying out to Jesus there's the leper's cry and then secondly the Lord's command

Jesus said to them go show yourself to the priests and as they went they were cleansed and then you have thirdly the lone complement this one who came back out of the ten to give praise and thanks to Jesus for what he had done so let's look at these briefly in turn the lepers cry first of all they were crying at a distance or from a distance when Jesus was passing along this route he was met by ten lepers who stood at a distance that was one of the things about leprosy of course going back to the Old Testament provisions and requirements Leviticus 13 to 14 where you find this emphasis on distance on separation and while of course we find minds go to the lepers in those days and since then that lived in a colony by themselves this was actually of course a matter of quarantine we're used to the idea of quarantine or self-isolation in these days with COVID-19 this was really self-isolation or quarantine for those who had leprosy so that they were separated off to protect the others from the leprosy being contracted by them so that's the explanation as to why they were standing at a distance they were at a required distance from those who didn't have the disease and they cried out to Jesus as he went through they obviously knew something about him had heard something about him or perhaps had seen him at other times and especially had some idea as to his authority or to his ability or power to deal with them and their need but this word mercy is really interesting because Luke uses it just to inject a sense of a deeper need he uses it elsewhere as well have mercy on us in other words the word itself is really saying to us there's something deeper about the need of these people and of all of us than our material or even physical needs the need of forgiveness the need of peace with God the need of salvation the need of restoration to a right relationship with God all of that comes into our need at its deepest and this word mercy reminds us tonight powerfully that that really is what we should give prominence to as we call upon God as we seek

[32 : 47] God as we pray to God we're constantly in need of his mercy his mercy is the ground of our blessing the fact that he is merciful is one of the greatest truths that we know about God as the psalmist says in psalm 130 Lord if you were to mark iniquity who could stand but there is forgiveness there is loving kindness with you there is mercy with you isn't that something that we're conscious of even in the very first moments of our turning to God in repentance the beginning of our spiritual journey as the catechism puts it in its definition of repentance it includes this an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ there are things too along with that but that's what's focused on here an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ where would you and I be tonight unless if you didn't know that God is merciful if you had a burden for your sins if you were filled with a sense of guilt over your sin as we are I trust at times and indeed in many ways all the time just imagine what it would be like if you did not know that God was merciful or if God was not merciful where would we be here he is crying out these lepers crying out master have mercy on us now it's wonderful news that a vaccine has become available or will be shortly available it seems that will deal with the

COVID-19 pandemic the world has been waiting for this it's been longing for this it's something that we've all looked forward to and it's a wonderful provision that we give thanks for as it is rolled out we trust safely over these weeks and months to come it'll make a massive difference to the world to people's lives to communities to large towns and cities of people country areas wherever we're placed we're thankful for that vaccine thankful for that COVID vaccine but here's the danger the danger for you and for me as well that as we've been longing for this vaccine and now here that this vaccine has become available the danger is that we will think of our need as no longer our need for God because this pandemic as we've said so often over the last few months has I trust been teaching us that our needs are deeper than material our needs are deeper than physical our needs are deeper than mental our needs are primarily spiritual needs and the COVID pandemic is a powerful reminder in God's providence that we don't have the answer ourselves to that deepest need however welcome a vaccine is as it is to deal with the COVID virus however many other means of relief we have for our illnesses remember there is no vaccine nothing in our own creation of our own making that can heal our sinfulness can deal with our guilt before God as I said to the children that's available to us in Jesus what a wonderful day that was when the son of God came into this world when he was called Jesus you might say the birth of the son of God taking our nature into this world the real meaning of

Christmas if you like as we often say at this time of year is that a spiritual vaccine entered into this world in the person of God's son so that by trusting in him we would find and have a cure for sin for our rebellion against God our spiritual deepest need master have mercy on us and even the word master is important there as well and let's remember that friends at this critical time in our experience as a people when sadly so much of our society defines success materially and not spiritually and that itself has an impact on the lack of thankfulness when we don't realise the source of them when we don't realise that even the bread on our table the food that we have in our supermarkets or whatever ultimately it's God's kindness that provides that for us and when we're not aware of that or don't want to think about that it's little wonder that there's so little thankfulness about whatever else we have in material and physical terms will never satisfy the deepest need of our souls but Jesus is that and the word master focuses on the authority that Jesus has to deal with that deepest need because again it's a word that

Luke uses a master word that brings us to Christ not just his power but his authority that he has the authority to deal with the deepest needs of man the authority to deal with the devil with the works of the devil the authority to deal with sin the authority indeed to deal with the demands of God himself who requires from us an account and for which Jesus came to make provision for us there is the leper's cry a reminder of ourselves at a distance from God a reminder of our deepest need which is spiritual not physical or material a reminder that Jesus is the master the one who has the authority to bring our lives back to what they should be to put things right between ourselves and God is that how you see him is that how he is in your life do you come every day to appeal to

[39 : 19] Jesus as master of your life is it the authority of Jesus that you're looking to to keep things right to put things right and to keep things right between yourself and God the authority of Jesus the leper's cry secondly we're looking at the Lord's command because look at the way the Lord then dealt with this when he saw them he said go and show yourselves to the priests and as they went they were cleansed it's interesting as you see in the gospels the way Jesus' life progresses onwards to the cross that the more hostility increases the more he suffers the more the more resistance there is to him as there is his compassion is not lessened you would imagine that with the scribes and the Pharisees and all others who are finding fault with him and refusing him and rejecting him and wanting indeed to put him to death you would imagine that

Jesus might say well I'm just going to reduce my compassion I'm going to just have a bare minimum amount of compassion from now on because obviously these human beings just don't want anything to do with me it's not that and what a wonderful source of comfort that point is for yourself and myself when we realise the many ways as we heard Kenny this morning in his wonderful emphasis on the falls that we have and the way God has a hold of us and puts us back on our feet and keeps us and does it again and again and again what a wonderful emphasis this is in Luke where the compassion of Jesus is something that continues to be stretched out toward us despite our falls despite our failures not as an excuse so that we'll just continue failing and not be bothered about it but so that we'll know that when we have again fallen and grazed our spiritual knees that he is there and his compassion is waiting for us what he said show yourself to the priests as they went they were cleansed now the priests were in a way they were like health inspectors with regard to leprosy when you look at chapter 5 for example you'll find another instance of Jesus dealing with leprosy with lepers and you'll find the same emphasis there after he had healed in chapter 5 and at verse 14 this was a single one individual who came full of leprosy and

Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him something itself which is remarkable given the need for quarantine and so on let's not go into that but it's an interesting point Jesus immediately the leprosy left him and he charged him tell no one but go and show yourself to the priest make an offering for your cleansing in other words the priests were given this authority this particular role in the society then to inspect those who'd had leprosy and were claiming to be cleansed of it just to make sure that the disease was no longer there and it did not need then to be kept at a distance but you see these ten lepers have not yet been cleansed and yet Jesus is saying to them go and show yourself to the priest as if they had been cleansed in other words it's a huge test of obedience here are these ten lepers knowing that only after they've been cleansed should they go and show themselves to the priest and here is Jesus saying to them now go and show yourself to the priests and as they responded they were cleansed as they went on their way as they obeyed the word of Jesus to go to the priest they could have said but Lord Master we're not yet cleansed we're still full of leprosy why are you telling us to go to the priest surely it's only after you've cleansed us will you

not cleanse us now so that we can then go to the priest no Jesus said go now that's what they did and that itself has an important point to make for our own experience as well we know the commands of God sometimes you know we find ways of just skirting round them or not really obeying them fully or looking for a way out from them if you like or maybe just thinking that well that's not necessarily the best way I don't think that's going to work for me think of Naaman in the Old Testament 2 Kings chapter 5 who was a leper in the days of Elisha and as he went to Elisha I've been told about him Elisha said go and dip yourself in the Jordan seven times and Naaman went away furious why was he furious because the Jordan was nothing like as significant as the rivers of Damascus where his background was in Syria and Naaman had said I thought that he would just come out and put his hand on the place and that would be it the leprosy would be cleansed you see that's our problem isn't it very often we actually say to God even if we don't face him outright to say it to his face nevertheless the call of the gospel the demand of Christ as it comes to I thought I thought this would be how it would be done I thought this would be the way that my life would develop I thought that this would be the best thing for me well we have to put those I thoughts behind us there are many times in life and the

[45 : 16] Lord will impress upon us your thoughts are not my thoughts neither are my ways your ways says the Lord here is an instance that teaches us how we need to respond to the command of Christ the call of Christ whatever it is without trying to find another way to come at it or without having to skirt round it so it's not quite done the way Jesus would have us do it completely and you see as they went they were cleansed see there's the point when you move in obedience to what Christ is saying salvation will meet you as you go when Jesus says to the man who had the withered hand stretch out your hand how was a man with a withered hand a man whose hand was pretty much useless who couldn't do anything with it how was he going to respond to Jesus who said stretch out your hand but that's what he did and as he stretched out his hand he was cured he was healed the paralysis went away tonight whatever Jesus is saying to you or to me whatever you hear his call don't try and skirt around it and say well I'd rather it was some other way or I'd rather it didn't involve this or that just do what he says and salvation will meet you on the way blessing will meet you on the way even if you're saved already so here is the Lord's command and what is his command to you tonight well his command to you is to trust in him take him at his word do what he requires of you have you yet to come to him personally for salvation is it the case that you know all about him and that you know what he's saying to you and that you need to go to him and confess your sin and seek his cleansing his forgiveness and yet you haven't yet done that are you resting satisfied or even dissatisfied in your soul and know that it's because you haven't yet come fully to accept Christ to give your life over to him for him to be the driver of your life well do it but wait for another way towards that just do it as he himself requires or whatever it is as a Christian the Lord is leading you towards don't doubt his word by all means pray over it by all means look for guidance from his word from the Bible people but when you're sure what it is he is calling on you to do like these people do it in response to him do it obediently blessing will actually follow your step of obedience but that takes us thirdly to the lone compliment here's a thankful Samaritan as we said is deliberately mentioned there now he was a Samaritan the end of verse 16 there one out of ten ten were blessed ten were given the blessing of healing from their leprosy but only one returned to give thanks they all received the same benefit they all received the same wonderful blessing of a cure of a cleansing of their leprosy but only one was thankful and isn't that so very like our own selves and our own society many tonight enjoy God's goodness and few come back to give him thanks in comparison to the many that receive benefits from him and isn't that true sadly even of many of our politicians and our leaders in government you wait patiently and longingly for one of them to come along and say we are thankful to God for bringing about the discovery the production of this vaccine have you heard them say it I haven't sure there are some in government who are thankful thankful to God oh that we had more public declaration of thankfulness of thankfulness and recognition of the goodness of God of the mercies of God of the wonderful way that God keeps providing us with so many benefits daily maybe there's not even one out of ten who knows but we know that in our own hearts there is nothing like the extent of thankfulness that we ought to have that I ought to have as I think of the many benefits that I receive every single day from

God there are many blessings in my life in my family life in my personal life there are many ways in which I can look back over my life and say I can see God's hand there I can see the benefit I received there yet my thankfulness has not kept up as it should have with these blessings how is it with yourself tonight aren't you thankful for what God gives you in providence aren't you thankful that you're under the gospel aren't you thankful that you belong to his church aren't you thankful for the provisions that he's made for you in the society we belong to aren't you thankful for the many benefits you have in terms of health provision in terms of counselling in terms of whatever else in our lives aren't we thankful are we thankful I'm sure we're not thankful enough that's why you have this strong question in verse 17 we're not ten cleansed where are the nine what is

[51 : 25] Jesus saying to us as a church tonight what is Jesus saying to all of us as we gather here through this means in his presence is he saying something like this to us as a people benefits that we continue to receive from him is God saying to us where are the nine where's the volume of thanksgiving he's certainly saying it to me you have to look into your life as well because you know thanksgiving is one of the things that characterizes a Christian most clearly when Paul wrote to the Philippians to direct them to not to be over anxious about anything but with prayer and supplication to make the request known to God with prayer and supplication with thankfulness make your request known to God because when we come to

God and ask for something that we need or something that we think we need to receive from him the help that we need from him if God sees us coming without the corresponding thankfulness do we think that he's really going to take us seriously if we just keep asking for things without giving thanks in return in the measure that we should well friends I'm saying this about myself as much as anyone else and tonight we can truly say as you see the posture of this man as he came to Jesus and threw himself on his face at the feet of Jesus giving him thanks even though he was a Samaritan the one you at least expect to do this this is the one that came back here's the proof that we've been saved as much as anything else that's not the words we use in our conversation to others important though that is it's not how often we attend church important though that is it's how thankful we are it's how much we go and give God thanks every day of our lives for the blessings that we receive from him you can gauge public morality by how thankful any society is or is not and that is so true of ourselves as a people it's a sad thing that thankfulness to God is so rare maybe even less than one out of ten

I wonder how many today throughout our nation as they think about COVID and the pandemic and the vaccine and the cure that that's hopefully going to bring us how many have gone on their knees to thank God for it how many have realised without God's blessing we would never have reached that point one out of ten you know the thing for you and for me to say tonight is I want to be that one I must be that one even if it's just one out of ten let that one be you let that one be me and you know let our lives show the thankfulness not just in words but in actions I spoke earlier about the Salvation Army appeal and one of the features behind our generosity in our generosity as we seek to help others who are in need one of the features of that generosity is that it comes from thankfulness it's not just pity or wanting to do good to others that's involved in it but if you're thankful yourself for what you have from God you'll be all the more ready to help those who don't have it and to thank God in return that he's blessed you so abundantly many years ago in a small town in Florida you could see an old man every evening carrying a large a large pail or basket or bucket of shrimps and he would do a very strange thing he would take this bucket of shrimps and walk out and start feeding the seagulls and he did that all the way through until he died in 1973 and the seagulls would flock after this man when they saw him coming because they knew that he was going to throw out all of these shrimps to them to feed them his name was

Eddie Rickenbacker Eddie Rickenbacker in 1942 was the captain of a B-17 bomber that was delivering a message he and another few companions had been given a message to take to General Douglas MacArthur who was in New Guinea at the time and as they went out in the plane they became lost and went out of reach of radio and despite their efforts to try and find a way they became lost and the fuel ran out and they had to ditch the plane in the ocean surrounded by sharks many of much of the time bad weather scorching sunlight sunshine and for nearly a month that went on day after day after day but eight days into that ordeal after they had had worship Eddie Rickenbacker read from the Bible the Bible in his pocket and he finished with a prayer for deliverance and then because it was so warm he pulled his hat down over his eyes and stretched out a little bit and he fell asleep the strange thing was a seagull came and landed on his head really

amusing a seagull came in the middle of the ocean miles and miles and miles from anywhere from any land it landed on his head and he thought if I can catch this seagull if I can take it we can actually eat the bird for food and maybe have some left over for bait to see if we can catch fish and that's what they did he caught the seagull they had it for food and they used part of it for bait as well and they were eventually rescued but that was one of the incidents along the way towards their survival and that's why

Eddie Rickenbacker every single evening until he died or every Friday night I think it was until he died he would go out with his bucket of shrimps and give them to the seagulls he was thankful for a seagull he was thankful to the seagull that had saved his life you could say he was thankful for the seagull that had given itself so that he would eventually be saved how much more must we be thankful for Jesus who gave himself that we might be saved and if we have Jesus in our thoughts then every day should be a day of thankfulness let's pray our gracious God make us increasingly thankful we pray for the blessings that we receive from you day by day your mercies Lord are new each morning great is your faithfulness and we pray that as day by day goes by and as our circumstances may sometimes change even at times into a time of challenge and of suffering nevertheless

[59 : 13] Lord enable us to be thankful that our Redeemer lives that he presides over all the events of life that he is the master we give you thanks oh Lord today for the many ways in which you continue to watch over us and bless us hear us now we pray and receive our worship cleanse us from our many sins for Jesus sake Amen our final psalm tonight is Psalm 105 Psalm 105 in the St. Psalms version and that's on page 138 we're singing to the tune St. Daniel give thanks to the Lord God and call on his name his wonderful deeds to the nations proclaim sing praises to him and his exploits record let all those who seek him rejoice in the Lord verses 1 to 11 the first four stanzas rejoice in the Lord give thanks to the Lord God and call on his name his wonderful deeds to the nations proclaim sing praises to him and his exploits record let all those who seek him rejoice in the Lord you chosen ones look to the Lord and his might see gather his face and his wonders recite his miracles too and his judgments divine you children of Abraham take up so line the Lord is our God and he rules all the earth remembering his covenant the word he set forth he vowed for the ages to come to make good his promise to Abraham to Isaac renewed to Jacob his sovereign decree was made sure with Israel his covenant would always endure to you

I will give as your portion to stand the country of Canaan the beautiful land and now may grace and mercy and peace from God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore Amen thank you once again for joining us this evening and I trust that in the days to come you'll know more and more of God's blessing and an increasing sense of thankfulness to the Lord for all his goodness Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen