

Sermon for October 12, 2025 – Thanksgiving

Luke 17:11-19 (EHV)

Theme: Celebrate a Samaritan Thanksgiving

- 1) Recognize what Jesus has done for you.
- 2) Come back with true thanksgiving.

¹¹On another occasion, as Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, he was passing along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²When he entered a certain village, ten men with leprosy met him. Standing at a distance, ¹³they called out loudly, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

¹⁴When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” As they went away they were cleansed.

¹⁵One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice. ¹⁶He fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, thanking him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Jesus responded, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸Was no one found to return and give glory to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹Then he said to him, “Get up and go your way. Your faith has saved you.”

Have you ever noticed how close the words “thank” and “think” are—just one letter apart? It’s no coincidence. True thanksgiving begins with thoughtful reflection on the kindness and generosity someone shows us. It moves us into a deeper relationship with the gift-giver.

Sadly, we don’t always think about why we give “thanks:” often saying it out of habit or forgetting to say it altogether. Such ingratitude, when directed towards the LORD, prevents us from deepening our relationship with God and sets our hearts adrift from Him. That’s why God, in His wisdom, so often encourages us to remember and thank Him for all His mercies—not for His sake, but for ours, lest we fall from faith.

Today, as we look at the account of the ten lepers, let’s learn to **celebrate a Samaritan Thanksgiving:**

- 1) Recognize what Jesus has done for you.
- 2) Come back with true thanksgiving.

Part One: Recognize what Jesus has done for you.

Our sermon text begins:

¹¹On another occasion, as Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, he was passing along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²When he entered a certain village, ten men with leprosy met him.

Leprosy was a devastating infectious skin disease that corrupted the flesh. God's Old Testament law commanded lepers to separate themselves from the rest of the community. They were cut off from the temple and had to live in camps outside of cities and villages. When anyone approached them, they had to yell, "Unclean! Unclean!" so as not to spread their infection.ⁱ

Can you imagine what that was like: being cast out from your community, unable to be with your loved ones, and forced to announce your presence with cries of "Unclean!" That was the life of a leper. Spiritually, sin does the same—it isolates us from God and others, leaving us longing for healing and restoration.

Yes, we are all spiritual lepers before God. Sin has so thoroughly corrupted every part of us that we cannot cleanse ourselves of it. Sin separates us from God and bars us from heaven. We are helpless, sick, and - if it weren't for Jesus - in danger of dying eternally without any hope of salvation.

Thankfully, neither we nor the ten lepers in our text were without Jesus. Somehow, news about His miraculous power and compassion reached their camp, and they believed He could heal them. That is why when they heard that Jesus was passing by the area, they went out to meet Him. But instead of yelling, "Unclean! Unclean!" as the Law dictated...

Standing at a distance, ¹³they called out loudly, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

And Jesus had mercy on them. According to His divine nature, He saw them before the creation of the world and planned for this exact moment when they would reach out to Him for mercy.ⁱⁱ He saw their misery and planned to make His saving power and love known by healing them.ⁱⁱⁱ

Jesus also saw us from before creation - all our sin, sorrow, and shame - and graciously chose to save us.^{iv} Not only did He plan how He would forgive us through His cross, but also the exact time we would meet Him through the preaching of His Word and administration of His sacraments to receive His mercy.

¹⁴When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests."

Knowing that their desire wasn't just for general mercy but specific healing, Jesus sent them to the priest. Why? Not to be healed by them—the priests had no such power—but to be declared clean according to God's law. He wanted them to act on the faith they had in Him - trusting that He would keep His Word.

As they went away they were cleansed.

Their healing illustrates our spiritual cleansing from sin. How often don't we call out to Jesus in repentance, feeling the great burden of our sin? God's Word tells us that we are forgiven, but we don't feel it. Like the lepers leaving Jesus for the temple - still seeing their leprosy - the guilt of our sins weighs on us. We are tempted to wonder: "Are we really forgiven?"

And this is where faith comes in: no matter how we feel, the Holy Spirit moves us to take Jesus at his Word. Faith doesn't wait for feelings to catch up. The lepers walked away still diseased but trusting Jesus' word. Likewise, we walk by faith, not by sight—believing Jesus' promise to forgive us even when feelings of guilt linger. And, as we do so, we notice a change take place within us: a peace with God that surpasses all understanding fills our hearts with joyful confidence.^v Jesus has healed us of our leprosy of sin! Let us now see how we can offer Him true thanksgiving.

Part Two: Come back with true thanksgiving.

¹⁵One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice. ¹⁶He fell on his face at Jesus' feet, thanking him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Jesus responded, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸Was no one found to return and give glory to God except this foreigner?"

Yes, where were the other nine? I imagine that, as soon as they saw they were healed, they offered a quick prayer of thanks and ran double time to the priest so that they could be declared clean and rejoin their family and friends as soon as possible. I picture them making plans to enjoy every moment of their renewed health with their loved ones and not squander their new lease of life.

Sadly, however, that is exactly what they did: squander God's gift of life. How? By not returning to Christ.

You see, every gift God gives is meant to either create or strengthen a bond between Him and the receivers of His gift – drawing them into a deeper relationship with Him. Unfortunately, the nine Jewish lepers' ingratitude revealed that they didn't care about having a relationship with Jesus. All they cared about was their freedom and how it could serve them.

And aren't we tempted to do the same? We pray for forgiveness, for mercy, for healing, for help in a crisis—and when God answers, we're grateful...for a moment. Soon, though, we drift back into our routines, forgetting the One who gave us every good thing. When that happens, the gifts become more important than the Giver, and we squander the opportunity for a deeper relationship with God. That endangers our everlasting salvation. How so? Because the less we think about God's grace for us in Christ, the more we drift away from Him until we lose Him altogether.

But the Samaritan was not like the other nine. When he noticed his healing, he didn't just offer a passing prayer of gratitude. He thought deeply about the undeserved grace Jesus showed by healing him, a foreign outcast. Moreover, He recognized Jesus as the promised Saviour who came to save him from his sins by reconciling him to God.

That is why when he saw that he was healed, he turned back, publicly glorifying God with a loud voice. And when he got to Jesus, he fell at His feet, thanking Him.

Jesus loved this Samaritan, which is why...

He said to him, "Get up and go your way. Your faith has saved you."

Understand Jesus' words correctly: He is not telling the Samaritan that his faith granted him healing, but that his faith in Jesus as the Messiah has saved him from the everlasting consequences of his sins. Jesus is exactly who the Samaritans believed him to be. Whoever believes in Jesus shall not perish, but have eternal life.^{vi}

Brothers and sisters in Christ, learn to celebrate Thanksgiving like the Samaritan did in our sermon text. How? Not by receiving God's gifts with an entitled, self-serving attitude. Rather, receive them with genuine thanksgiving, thinking about the love God expresses to you by graciously providing everything you need for your body and life. More importantly, rejoice in how Jesus forgave your sins so that you might have an everlasting relationship of peace and love with God forever in paradise.

So don't just offer a quick prayer of thanks this morning so you can run off and do your thing. Instead, remain at Jesus' feet even after you leave worship, contemplating all the blessings God daily showers upon you – many of which we often take for granted. May the thought of them move you to run back to Jesus every time worship and Bible study are offered here at Divine Word. And on the days when they aren't, may the thought of His love move you to seek Him out in private Bible study at home.

Yes, may the love God has for you in Christ not just lead you to offer a momentary, silent prayer of thanks in your heart. Instead, let it move you to loudly glorify God among your family, friends, and neighbours. Why? Because true thanksgiving isn't just a moment of passing gratitude—it's a movement of the heart that draws us closer to Jesus, the Giver of every good gift. Amen.

ⁱ Cf. Leviticus 13:45-46 & 2 Chronicles 26:19-21

ⁱⁱ Cf. Acts 17:26-27

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. John 9:1-3

^{iv} Cf. Ephesians 1:4-12

^v Cf. Philippians 4:7

^{vi} Cf. John 3:16