Thanksgiving Luke 17:11-19
November 26, 2020 615-260-612-609-610

Give Thanks – Like This Grateful Samaritan
I. Grateful for God's mercy.
II. Grateful for blessings received.
III. Grateful with words and actions.

Dear Christian friends,

So is today "Happy Thanksgiving!" with an EXCLAMATION **point** or "Happy Thanksgiving?" with a QUESTION **mark**? How can this be a "**Happy** Thanksgiving**!**" when there's a pandemic **going on** – when you're told to **stay home** and **stay away** from family and friends? **Maybe** you've even heard some people say they WILL BE THANKFUL when 2020 is **finally over**. They say that **even though** there's NO GUARANTEE 2021 will be better than this year.

Perhaps MORE THAN in other years we really need today WITH ITS CALL to pause and actually count our blessings. We need to stop and see that **yes**, 2020 has been a VERY DIFFERENT and difficult year **in many ways** but God HAS BEEN - and STILL IS! - so good to us – so kind – **gracious** – **faithful** – **generous**.

Jesus here was obviously disappointed that WHILE ALL TEN of these lepers were healed ONLY ONE actually returned to **thank** Him. Or think of it **this way** – 90% of those **so blessed** never bothered to thank Jesus. Jesus was disappointed with **those nine** but HOW PLEASED He was with this **grateful, thankful Samaritan**. So today - WHEN IT'S SO TEMPTING to turn our "Happy Thanksgiving" from an exclamation into a question let's GIVE THANKS LIKE this **grateful Samaritan**. LIKE this Samaritan 1)be grateful for **God's** mercy, 2)**be grateful** for blessings received and 3)**be grateful** with words and actions.

I. Be grateful for God's mercy.

At first glance these ten lepers DIDN'T SEEM to have much to **be thankful** for. They had leprosy! **Back then** leprosy was considered to be HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS and there was no known cure for it. **Back then** lepers didn't just SELF-QUARANTINE for two weeks or so. Lepers were banished from **family** and **society** – forced to live away from **anyone** and everyone except their fellow lepers. BARRING a **miracle** you could only watch the leprosy MORE AND MORE destroy your body UNTIL you finally died isolated from **all your loved ones**. "HAPPY **Thanksgiving**?"

SOMEHOW or other these lepers had heard about Jesus. HOW they heard about Him – WHAT they all knew about Jesus – we're **not told**. But what they had heard about Jesus LED THEM TO BELIEVE that Jesus could help – could heal! – them. So as Jesus travelled in their area they ***"met Him"*** and ***"standing at a distance, they called out loudly, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!'"***

What a BEAUTIFUL prayer! They didn't approach Jesus with **any** BITTERNESS or **resentment** – "Boy, Lord, You're sure doing a LOUSY JOB taking care of us!" There is NO DEMANDING from God as if God OWED them **good health** or a **good life**. They didn't even tell Jesus EXACTLY WHAT they wanted. They simply **yet** confidently ask, ***"Lord, have MERCY on us!"***

LIKE this **grateful** Samaritan BE GRATEFUL for God's ***"mercy."*** Mercy is God taking PITY on us – God having COMPASSION on us – God seeing us in our MISERY and MESS and just having TO HELP us. God doesn't OWE us mercy – He CHOOSES to be merciful to us **because** that's JUST THE WAY He is – JUST WHO He is – ***"rich in mercy."***

We see God's mercy IN SO MANY WAYS but especially that God ***"does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities"*** to use David's words in Psalm 103. WHAT MERCY

God **showed us** when He gave us His own eternal Son to be our perfect Savior! We have so many blessings **to count** today but AT THE VERY TOP of that list must be Jesus and all He's done for us. WHAT MERCY – Jesus lives for us the **sinless life** we owed God – Jesus takes the blame for the sins of the whole world and is punished in our place – Jesus sheds His precious blood and sacrifices His holy life all to ***"take away the sin of the world"*** – Jesus shares with us His **Easter victory** over death and the grave. Oh WHAT MERCY – trusting in Jesus WE HAVE God's forgiveness of all our sins and God's promise of eternal life in heaven the **very moment** we die. ***"Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, His MERCY endures forever!"***

II. Grateful for blessings received.

Jesus showed mercy to these ten lepers. They didn't SPECIFICALLY ASK Jesus to heal them and Jesus didn't IMMEDIATELY HEAL them. **Instead** Jesus tells them, ***"Go, show yourselves to the priests."*** Priests had to OFFICIALLY PRONOUNCE lepers ***"clean"*** – healed of their leprosy. Telling them to ***"go show yourselves to the priests"*** Jesus was promising to heal them – but he didn't **right away**. IN FAITH they took Jesus **at His Word**. They headed off to the priests STILL LEPERS. ***"AS they went"*** – somewhere along the way – ***"they were cleansed." "One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice. He fell on his face at Jesus' feet, thanking Him."***

LIKE this **grateful** Samaritan give thanks to God for BLESSINGS RECEIVED. Among those blessing COUNT God's Word and your faith in Jesus as your Savior.

I mentioned that we DON'T KNOW **how much** these lepers knew about Jesus or how they heard about Jesus. God doesn't want **anyone** GUESSING or HAVING ANY DOUBTS about Jesus. So God gave us His Word IN WRITING – ***"that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in His name."***

With His law God CONFRONTS us with our sin and shows us our DESPERATE NEED for Jesus. No doubt there's BEEN PLENTY of **grumbling** and **complaining** this year – about Covid – about avoiding people – wearing/**not wearing** masks – about politics and **politicians**, etc., etc. Do we realize WHAT A SLAP in God's face our grumbling and **complaining** really are? Grumbling and complaining we're basically accusing God of DOING A LOUSY JOB taking care of us – that we deserve BETTER – that God really DOESN'T KNOW what He's doing. OH, REALLY??!! God should just shrug that off as **no big deal**? God should JUST KEEP BLESSING such ungrateful whiners?!

With the gospel God REVEALS His **amazing grace** and **mercy**. The Bible reveals JUST WHO Jesus really is – God's Son born our brother. The Bible reveals JUST HOW Jesus has saved us from our sin and guilt, from death and hell – WITH HIS **perfect** life – **sacrificial** death – **triumphant** resurrection. The Bible reveals - IN WRITING! – those COUNTLESS fantastic, comforting promises God has made us – including to ***"meet all our needs"*** and ***"work all things"*** for our eternal good. Thank God for that REVELATION of His Word and for your faith that TRUSTS His **Word** and **promises**!

LIKE this **grateful** Samaritan thank God for PRAYERS ANSWERED – **yes**, that God answers all our prayers and ALWAYS IN the best way possible. SOMETIMES God heals us of **whatever sickness** – He takes away **whatever problem**. SOMETIMES God doesn't heal us or doesn't take away the problem. God THEN USES those **problems** and **sicknesses**, etc., FOR OUR GOOD – to draw us closer to Him – to refocus our lives back on Him – to strengthen our faith in Him – to RELY ON HIM to take care of us – to teach us to TRUST Him even when we DON'T UNDERSTAND what He's doing. THANK God that He's smarter than us – that He LOVES US ENOUGH to do what HE knows is **best for us** even when WE DON'T THINK so.

Thank God for the PEOPLE **God has put** in your life. These **lepers** had been banished from their families and friends – but they HAD EACH OTHER. No doubt their REUNIONS with family and friends

were joyous and wonderful. **No doubt** their leprosy gave them a BETTER APPRECIATION of those people.

Isn't it SUCH A BLESSING that there are people who **actually want** to BE PART of our lives? **Sure**, they're not PERFECT but then neither are we! **Perhaps** they see OUR FAULTS and **shortcomings** better than we do yet they STILL LOVE us and want to be WITH us – your spouse – **parents** – **children** – siblings – your FELLOW CHRISTIANS. What blessings God LAVISHES on us **through them**! GOD GRANT that we be such blessings to them!

LIKE this **grateful** Samaritan thank God for BLESSINGS RECEIVED. The list of those blessings is SO LONG **and** SO PERSONAL. God blesses **each one** of us INDIVIDUALLY and **uniquely**. Yet **for all** of us there isn't a single blessing on our lists that we can point to and say, "God OWED me that – I deserved that." **What** did we say before AFTER THAT LONG LIST of blessings in the explanation to the 1st Article? "ALL THIS GOD DOES only because He is my **good and merciful Father** in heaven and not because I **have earned** or **deserved** it." That indeed "IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE!"

III. Grateful with words and actions.

With words and actions this **grateful** Samaritan GAVE THANKS to Jesus. This was no QUICKLY RATTLED off, ***"O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good. AMEN!" "When he saw that he was healed, he turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice."***

He ***"turned back."*** **Giving thanks** just couldn't wait until tomorrow or whenever. He had to do this NOW – RIGHT AWAY. It was important to him to **go back** and PERSONALLY THANK Jesus – and not just with a QUICK, "**Thanks**, Lord! Gotta run now. Catch You later." ***"He fell on his face at Jesus' feet, thanking Him."*** He's OVERWHELMED with gratitude. He CAN'T GET OVER it. This is just SO AWESOME – so FANTASTIC! God help us to BE SO THANKFUL for His blessings!

"With a loud voice – glorifying God." This **grateful Samaritan** wanted others to know WHAT GOD had **all done** for him. This was JUST TOO GOOD to keep to himself. Jesus had helped HIM – **maybe** that would encourage others to GO TO Jesus for help.

LIKE this **grateful Samaritan** be sure to thank God with WORDS and ACTIONS. That's one reason why WE HAVE these Thanksgiving services. **Thanksgiving** isn't just about REALIZING HOW GOOD **we really have** it but PUBLICLY THANKING GOD for being so good to us. **Thanksgiving** isn't just about being THANKFUL FOR THINGS but especially about **being thankful** to THE GIVER of all these blessings – our **gracious God**.

So is today "Happy Thanksgiving!" with an EXCLAMATION **point** or "Happy Thanksgiving?" with a QUESTION **mark**? LIKE this **grateful Samaritan** may our thanksgiving be with MULTIPLE **exclamation points**! Amen.

HYMN 609