

Pastor Matthew Ude  
Thanksgiving Service  
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INI – SDG

# Jesus Brings Us Together

**Luke 17:11-19** <sup>11</sup> Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup> Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. <sup>13</sup> And they lifted up *their* voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" <sup>14</sup> So when He saw *them*, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. <sup>15</sup> And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, <sup>16</sup> and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup> So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where *are* the nine?" <sup>18</sup> "Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" <sup>19</sup> And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

Whenever we discuss the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment, I always tell the students that one of the chief blessings that God gives us through our parents is discipline. To learn right from wrong is one of the most precious things we can receive from our parents. I often also suggest that they should go home and tell their parents, "Thanks for disciplining me." This year one of the boys reported that his mother's response was, "what are you talking about?"

It's not surprising that she was a little surprised maybe even thought her son was being sarcastic. Discipline is not a thing we often think to be thankful for. The gifts for which we ought to be most thankful are often the ones that are easiest to overlook or even to think of as a bad thing. We probably thought discipline a bad thing and not a blessing when we were young.

The prophet Job reminds us that we ought to be just as thankful for that which is taken as that which is given.

**Job 1:21 NKJ The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.**

In the account of the of the ten lepers, we often overlook one of the greatest blessings which Jesus gave to them and to you. Even though it is a blessing which considering what we have been through in the last few years we really shouldn't be taken for granted.

That is the gift of fellowship or community. He brings these outcasts back together with their friends and family. He restores them to the fellowship of the whole nation of Israel and more importantly to fellowship with Himself and God our Father.

This is what Jesus does. This is what He came to do, to restore broken relationships, to bring us together again in Him, to bring us together with God. We are no longer outcasts.

Notice how these lepers stand far off and cry to Jesus from a great distance, but then being cleansed the one who returns draws near to Christ and bows down before him.

**Ephesians 2:12-13 at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

This is what Jesus does and this is what ought to come near the top of our list of things to be thankful for this thanksgiving.

Jesus does not heal leprosy. Not once in all of scripture does Jesus heal leprosy. He cleanses it.

The three synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all make a distinction between other diseases and leprosy. Jesus heals many diseases but leprosy He cleanses.

In Matthew chapter ten when Jesus is sending out the disciples, he tells them:

**Matthew 10:8 8 "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.**

Again, there is this distinction between other disease and leprosy. He heals many but leprosy is cleansed.

This is true even in the Old Testament. When Naaman has leprosy, he asks to be healed. The letter that is sent to the king of Israel demands that he heal Naaman. But when Elisha speaks, he says that Naaman will be clean if he bathes seven times in the Jordan. Again, Naaman responds with healed, and the bible responds with "be clean."

Leprosy was not just a sickness or a disease in Israel. It was a vivid picture of man's sin and how man was cut off from God and one another because of our sin.

In Leviticus 14:57 after giving the laws about leprosy God says that these laws are:

**"to teach when it is unclean and when it is clean. This is the law of leprosy."**

God cleanses Naaman and he is brought into the fellowship of God's people and fellowship with God Himself. Jesus cleanses the ten and they are able to go back to their people. They are able to go into the temple. They are able to go home. They are able to celebrate the Passover with their families again.

Imagine for years being unable to celebrate Thanksgiving or Christmas with your family, then Christ comes and you can this year celebrate with them again. This is what Christ did for these lepers. This is what Jesus does for us. He restores broken relationships. He brings us together again.

In Genesis chapter two God said:

**Genesis 2:18 *It is not good that man should be alone***

God recognizes that this issue of the need for community is so important that the entire chapter of Genesis 2 is dedicated to this one thing. He gives humans fellowship. He gives humans community. He brings people together.

In Genesis chapter one, God creates the universe. In Genesis chapter three, man falls into sin. In between in Genesis chapter two, God gives us fellowship.

Mark Zuckerberg does not bring people together. Jesus does.

God solves man's need in a two-fold way in Genesis 2. One, He creates Eve as a companion for Adam. Two, He blesses the seventh day and makes it holy.

This blessing of the seventh day means that God set aside the seventh day as a day when He Himself would come and spend time with man. We not only have fellowship with one another but also with God.

**1 John 1:3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.**

This fellowship is so important that teenagers are often driven by this desire to do things they know are wrong and don't really want to do anyway, smoking, drugs, sex, etc. It's not the only reason they are tempted to do these things, but it is one powerful reason, that desire to fit in, that desire to belong, that desire for fellowship.

Yet we see in our text the result of fellowship without Christ. The lepers had a fellowship of sorts. There were ten of them grouped together, but still as outcasts.

In our text Jesus recreates Genesis chapter two. As God made a wife for Eve so Jesus gives these men back to their families. As God gave the seventh day as a day of fellowship with God. So Jesus gives fellowship with God again this time in Himself. He is the sabbath, the day of rest, the way in which we have fellowship with the Father.

Jesus cleanses their leprosy and brings them back into the people of God. Jesus cleanses our sin bringing us back into the fellowship with one another and with Him.

And yet as precious and wonderful and joyful as this gift is it is one that we often take for granted and even spit and trample under foot. It is a gift we often despise.

We are good at recognizing the value of money. A ten is more valuable than a five. We would never agree to trade someone a ten for a five. But we are terrible at recognizing the value of God's gifts. This togetherness is a most valuable gift, to be treasured above all things. Yet we often trade it away for nothing.

Adam and Eve trade away this togetherness with God for a bite of fruit, and afterwards lost even the togetherness they had with each other.

Nine of the lepers do not understand or value this gift and do not return to thank Jesus.

We too often devalue this gift selling it very cheaply.

Which is of greater value our pride or a friend? Yet we often for the sake of pride create division between ourselves and those who were our friends.

Which is of greater value vengeance, anger, resentment, getting even, or a friend? Yet we often refuse to speak to those who should be our friends out of anger and spite. For the sake of politic views, for the sake of teams we support, for the sake of money and property we create division and refuse to love our neighbor.

Not one of these things is even close to as valuable as the oneness Christ desires to give us in Himself, yet we are constantly throwing away fellowship with one another and with God for such valueless things.

We are like the ten lepers, unclean in our sin, having traded the wealth of God's fellowship for the emptiness of worthless sinful attitudes. Christ cleanses us and restores us to true unity. Jesus cleanses and restores us to true unity through His death. We are brought together in Christ.

Let us learn to be truly thankful for the fellowship we have in Christ Jesus.

**Amen**