

“Where are the Nine?”

Luke 17:11-19

The other day I read how one man could tell Thanksgiving is getting near. He said, “When I see the Christmas lights being strung up on the streets and Santas in store windows at the Mall, I know Thanksgiving is around the corner.” Unlike other holidays like Easter, 4th of July, Halloween, and Christmas, the only item stores can promote in November is turkeys. Stores owners haven’t found a way to commercialize and make money on expressing gratitude and thanksgiving.

I heard one person recently on TV say we don’t call the fourth Thursday in November Thanksgiving anymore—Now it is called “the day before ‘black Friday.’” “Black Friday” is now a bigger day than Thanksgiving!

- Thanksgiving is more than a holiday we celebrate—it is a condition of the heart!
- More than a DAY—it is a DUTY.
- Thanksgiving is not an OPTION—It is an OBLIGATION!
- No commands in the Bible to celebrate CHRISTMAS or EASTER, but we are commanded to always give thanks in all things!

In Luke 17 we have a story that is reenacted countless times in society today. It is a story of how most people fail to express thanksgiving.

Jesus is making His way to Jerusalem where He will be crucified before the week is over. Unlike most Jews who avoided Samaria, Jesus purposely passed through a Samaritan village where He is met by 10 lepers.

I. The SHARED problem (vs. 11-12).

A. The **COMMON** malady—Leprosy, a type of sin (Rom. 3:23).

➡ Sin levels the playing field—Sin puts us all in the same boat.

These nine Jewish lepers had no problem being in the same company with a Samaritan leper. Under normal circumstances they would never remain in the presence of a Samaritan. But, as they say, “misery loves company,” and in their miserable condition, their racial differences didn’t matter. They were all dying of the same disease. “Birds of a feather flock together.”

B. The **CONDITION** of leprosy (v. 12).

1. Leprosy begins on the inside and eventually shows up on the flesh and rapidly spreads and becomes worse.
2. Once it shows up, a leper has only a short time before it kills him. A leper suffers a living death.
3. Live in total isolation in a leper colony (v. 12—“...stood afar off.”). Lev. 13:45-46 says, “*And the leper in whom the plague is, ...shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.*”
 - Leprosy broke up families and separated friends. The only companions of a leper were other lepers.
4. Incurable/hopeless—Only a miracle could change their condition.

C. The **COMPARISON** of sin.

1. Like leprosy, sin starts on the inside and manifests itself in the works of the flesh.
2. Like leprosy, sin separates us from God!
3. Like leprosy, sin is fatal (Rom. 6:23). Leprosy destroys the body, but sin destroys both body and soul.
4. Like leprosy, sin is incurable apart from God’s intervention. You cannot cure yourself... a church cannot cure you... a ritual cannot cleanse you from sin. Jesus Christ is the only answer for your sin.

II. The SUPPLICATION for mercy (v. 13).

- A. They called Jesus “**MASTER.**” The word translated “*master*” means “chief commander.” They believed Jesus was in command of disease and death.
- B. They called for **MERCY**—They did not plead their merits or rights. They did not ask for healing—They cried for mercy.

1. **The way to receive God’s help is to come via the door of mercy.** God’s ears are always open to a cry for mercy (cf. Luke 18:10-14).
2. This is also true for salvation. *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his **mercy**, he saved us"* (Titus 3:5).
3. They would have not been healed if they did not call. If you want to be saved, you must call—*"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Rom. 10:13).

III. The SIMPLE command of Christ (v. 14a).

- A. The WAY of salvation is plain and uncomplicated. It is by believing what God said.
 1. Jesus didn’t touch them as He healed other lepers. Jesus simply told them to go show themselves to the priest.
 2. Jesus could have healed them first, THEN tell them to go to the priest. But that would not have required any faith.
 - When Naaman was healed for his leprosy, he was told to go dip seven times in the Jordan (2 Kings 5). Nothing happened until he acted in faith and did what he was told.
- B. The WISDOM of salvation. The wisest thing you can do is trust Christ to save your soul.
 1. These lepers were in a hopeless situation—They were dying. “Why not give it a try? What do we have to lose, but our leprosy?”
 - The four lepers outside the gate of Samaria reasoned the same way—*"Why sit we here until we die?"* (2 Kings 7:3-4)
 2. The same is true of salvation. Why not trust Christ as your Savior? What do you have to lose except your sins and an eternity in hell?

IV. The SUDDEN miracle of cleansing (v. 14b).

- A. Trust and Obey! If these lepers believed Jesus, they would simply start walking in faith to go to the priest.

B. How far did they go before they were cleansed? Not far! I believe they were cleansed when they took their first step. They see with amazement as the white scales fell from their skin and their flesh becomes like that of a baby!

V. The **SOLITARY offering of thanks** (vs. 15-16).

- Of the nine verses relating the story, five focus on the Samaritan who returned to give thanks.
- The Samaritan would not be permitted at the temple for he was not a Jew. He could not approach a priest.
- Once the leprosy that united them in misery was gone, the old racial prejudice flared up again, and the Jews departed on their way and left the Samaritan to return to Jesus..
- **Five characteristics of thanksgiving:**
 - A. PERSONAL — “*one of them...*” Individuality. No one can do your thanksgiving for you.
 - B. PROMPT — “*...when he saw that he was healed...*”
 - C. PASSION — “*...with a loud voice glorified God...*” [“Loud” - Gk. *megas* / “Voice” - Gk. *phone*]. He was not ashamed of what Jesus did for him. He wanted everyone to know!
 - D. PIETY — “*...fell down on his face at his feet...*”
 - E. PRAISE — “*...giving him thanks...*”
 - Desperation may bring you to Christ, but only gratitude can keep you there.

VI. The **SPECULATION concerning the nine** (vs. 17-18).

- The nine were probably anxious to get to the priest and be pronounced clean, so they could be reunited with their families.
- They were so caught up in the **gift** they forgot the **Giver**. Like a child with a new toy on Christmas morning.
- A. SENSE of disappointment. Is Christ wrong to expect a “thank-you”?

1. *“Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!”* (Ps. 107:8, 15, 21, 31).
 - We praise and thank God because He is worthy. David said the Lord *“is worthy to be praised”* (Ps. 18:3).
 - We praise and thank God because it is good for us—**Blessing God blesses us!**
 2. A sad ratio. Ten prayed—One praised. Most of us are quick to pray but slow to praise. We do more praying than we do praising. Prayer focuses on our needs. Praise is focused on God’s glory. Prayer is for *time*—praise is for *eternity*.
- B. SILENCE of the Samaritan —
1. The Samaritan did not answer Jesus’ question. He did not say, “Well, Lord, I guess they have no manners. They’ve already forgotten You.” No, this Samaritan was too focused on thanking Jesus for what He did for him than to be critical about the failures and shortcomings of others.
 2. You cannot be thankful and critical at the same time.

VII. The SALVATION of the stranger (v. 19).

- A. *“Stranger”* is a word used for a Gentile (Judg. 19:12; Ruth 2:10; 2 Sam. 1:13; 1 Kings 8:41; Acts 2:10 cf. Eph. 2:12, 19).
 - Picture of salvation being extended to Gentiles in the church age.
- B. He GOT something the other nine didn’t GET (v. 19)!
 1. Ten were physically cleansed on the outside, but the Samaritan was **made WHOLE on the inside**.
 2. Verse 14 says the nine Jews *“were cleansed.”* Verse 15 says the Samaritan *“was healed.”* Verse 19 says he was made WHOLE. What’s the difference?
 - The 9 Jewish lepers needed cleansing because the Law said they were “unclean.”
 - The Samaritans considered a fellow Samaritan with leprosy *diseased* in need of healing. Jesus Christ proved to be

sufficient for all—cleansing, healing, and making one WHOLE. Apart from a relationship with Jesus, you are not a WHOLE person!

- Praise and thanksgiving not only expresses our joy, but it also completes our joy! Without praise, we are left unfilled.
 - With tears of joy, he goes on his way singing, "Thank you, Lord for saving my soul, thank you Lord for making me *whole*."

SUMMATION: Every good thing you've received in life came from God (James 1:17). He deserves our perpetual thanksgiving (Eph. 5:20)!

- How often have you thanked God for your family.
- At the end of a workday, do you ever take time to say, "Thank You, Lord, for giving me the skill, ability, and health to do my work today?"
- Do you ever go through your house and thank God for your furniture... appliances... the roof over your head... food in your cupboard... running water in your kitchen and bathrooms... and warmth from a furnace?
- Do you thank God for a vehicle to get you from place to place.
- When was the last time you thanked God for the clothes you wear on your back?
- Have you told the Lord lately, "Thank You Lord, for my Bible... my church... my freedom?"

When we take these blessings for granted, we are no better than the nine who failed return and thank God for all He has done for us.

- If you are not saved this morning, Jesus will save you if you call upon Him for mercy. Will you come and be saved today.
- If Jesus has saved you and made you WHOLE, why not come and tell Him, THANK YOU, LORD for saving my soul?