

Luke 17:11-19 CEB  
The Other Nine  
WRCoB 11.20.22

Abraham Lincoln spoke these words on October 3, 1863  
As he officially recognized Thanksgiving as a holiday

*We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation ever has grown; but we have forgotten God! We have forgotten the gracious Hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.*

159 years later, not much has changed.

We live in a nation where we pursue happiness relentlessly

And it is most often expressed in possessing material things.

And after living a life of affluence for years or generations  
Many begin to feel entitled by their wealth.

And no longer feel any gratitude toward God.

I quote from the website, Greater Good Science Center

*A society that feels entitled to what it receives does not adequately express gratitude.*

And gratitude, research has found is key to happiness.

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Jesus was passing through the border area  
Between Samaria and Galilee  
On his way to Jerusalem.

Some lepers stood off at a distance  
As required by the local health codes.

And seeing Jesus, they called to him, "Have mercy on us!"

Jesus turned to them, and told them to go see the priests.

And they went and as they went, they were cleansed.

In early Jewish society  
Those who have been cured of a disease  
Had to go and be examined by the priests.

If the leprosy was gone  
The priests would declare them healed  
And they could return to society.

Jesus sent them to the priests before actually healing them!

Maybe, Jesus did it this ambiguous way  
So that the lepers couldn't specifically  
Connect their healing with Jesus.

When they were cleansed of their leprosy  
One returned to give thanks to Jesus.

Luke, with his sensitivity to the marginalized  
Had to mention that

**He was a Samaritan.**

We assume, then, the other nine were Jews.

Jesus takes note and asks

**Luke 17:17-18 CEB Jesus replied, "Weren't ten  
cleansed? Where are the other nine?"<sup>18</sup> No one returned  
to praise God except this foreigner?"**

The story of the ten lepers could be used as an allegory  
For us who live in the USA.

We live in one of the most affluent nations in the world.

And yet, could it be that 9 out of 10 of us  
Have forgotten God?

And it seems, the more affluent we become  
The less grateful people we are.

Those who lived through the Great Depression of the 30s  
Were very grateful to have a job and food.

Nowadays, we feel entitled to have that and more.

I use the word entitled to mean  
We believe we inherently deserve  
Special privileges and blessings.

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Consider for a moment how the rest of the world lives.

According to the World Food Program,  
828 million people in the world  
Do not have enough to eat.

According to the United Nations  
25,000 people die of starvation EVERY DAY  
Including more than 11,000 children.

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To help us get an idea how the rest of the world lives  
Robert L. Heilbroner, a leading U.S. economist  
Describes what that might look like.

We begin by invading our [typical American home]  
To strip it of its furniture.

Everything goes, beds, chairs, tables, TV, and lamps.

We leave a few old [mattresses] and blankets  
A kitchen table, and a wooden chair.

Along with the dressers goes all the clothes.

Each member of the family may keep in his 'wardrobe'  
The oldest suit or dress  
One everyday shirt or blouse  
And one pair of pants for daily wear.

We will permit a pair of shoes for the head of the household  
[and flip-flops for the rest of the family].

We move to the kitchen.

The appliances have already been taken out.

A box of matches may stay  
A small bag of flour, some sugar, and salt.

All the rest we take away  
The meat, the vegetables, the canned goods  
The crackers, and the candy.

Now we [strip] the rest of the house.

The bathroom is dismantled.  
The running water shut off, the electricity turned off.

Communications must go next.

No more newspapers, magazines, or books.

Instead, we allow one radio.

Now government services must go.

No more postman, no more fireman, no more police officers.

There is a school.

But it is three miles away and consists of two classrooms.

There are, of course, no hospitals or doctors nearby.

The nearest clinic is ten miles away, tended by a midwife.

It can be reached by a bicycle  
Provided that the family has a bicycle..

Finally, money.

We will allow our family, \$5.

This is how so many in our world live.

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Now compare this with these statistics  
Gathered by Rob Bell in his book  
*Jesus Wants to Save Christians*

The US controls nearly 25% of the world's wealth.

There are six billion people in the world  
And roughly 300 million people in the US.

That makes America less than 5% of the world's population.  
With 25% of the world's wealth.

And yet, we feel entitled to all of it.

Because as James Steward prays in the movie Shenandoah

*We plowed it, sowed it, and harvest it. We cook the harvest. It wouldn't be here and we wouldn't be eating it if we hadn't done it all ourselves. We worked dog-bone hard for every crumb and morsel, but we thank you Lord just the same for the food we're about to eat, Amen.*

Going back to our story of the 10 lepers  
Where did the other nine go?

There moved to the United States.

I know I am being flippant and facetious.

Maybe they were grateful.

Maybe they were in such a rush  
To see their families after years of isolation  
They didn't have time to thank their healer.

The nine could be characterized  
As having a sense of entitlement.

Maybe their ingratitude and sense of entitlement  
Denied Jesus' healings  
And the blessings given them by him.

As Lincoln said it of Americans  
The other nine forgot about God.

And the one foreigner in their midst didn't.

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Gratitude is a remedy for a sense of entitlement.

Mark T. Mitchel, professor of political science  
At Patrick Henry College writes

*Gratitude is born of humility, for it acknowledges the  
giftedness of the creation and the benevolence of the  
Creator.*

When we are made aware of God's blessings  
It humbles us and frees us  
To express our gratefulness to God.

It is good to give thanks to God  
For all things we've experienced.

Even for the difficult things we've endured in life  
For they build in us patience and endurance.

Actually, gratitude produces personal benefits.

Current research suggests gratitude  
Helps us experience more positive emotions

Such as:

*Optimism, enthusiasm, love, joy, and happiness*  
([www.health.harvard.edu](http://www.health.harvard.edu))

Robert Emmons a professor at UC David  
Lists 10 benefits of gratitude  
In an article in Psychology Today

- Gratitude improves self-esteem.
- Gratitude improves energy and health.
- Gratitude makes us happier and more optimistic.
- Gratitude makes us more resilient to deal with adversity.
- Grateful people are more generous and forgiving.
- Gratitude keeps you in the present moment.
- Gratitude makes you happier and more aware
- And gratitude lowers stress, anxiety and worry.

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Humility makes us aware that everything good in life  
Is a freely-given gift from God..

Humility makes us aware  
And gratitude gives expression to this awareness.

Someone once wrote.

*“Shall I thank God at this Thanksgiving?*

*Why was I born at this time in the history of the world?*

*Why was I born in a spotless delivery room  
In an American hospital*

*Instead of a steaming shelter  
In the jungle of the Amazon or a mud-hut in Africa?*

*Why did I have the privilege of going to school  
With capable instructors*

*While millions around the world  
Without a school book sit or squat on a dirt floor?*

*How does it happen that my children  
Are tucked into warm beds at night with clean sheets*

*While millions of babies in the world  
Make their beds out in the cold?*

*Why can I sit down to a warm meal  
Whenever I want to and eat too much*

*When millions will know all their lives  
The gnawing pains of hunger?*

*Do I deserve to share in such wealth?*

*Why me and not other millions?*

*In this, we find the humble awareness  
That transforms a sense of entitlement into gratitude.*

*~~*

*In our story today  
Jesus healed 10 lepers.*

He was free to choose whom he would bless.

He chose to heal all ten  
Not expecting anything in return.

He did not demand the other nine  
To fall at his feet and pay him obeisance.

Because Jesus loved them  
He freely gave the gift of healing.

The healed were free to respond however they chose.

One chose to give thanks.

And in so doing, he and he alone  
Received a spiritual blessing as well.

For Jesus said to him  
**Your faith has made you well.**

In reality, it was his faith AND his gratitude  
That saved him.

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And so, let us not forget God this Thanksgiving

Let us move from a sense of entitlement  
To a humble awareness  
To a feeling of gratitude  
For all of God's gifts freely given

And so, where are the other nine?

They are not here in this sanctuary  
Or online with us today!

Thanks be to God.