

Wheelersburg Baptist Church
Sunday Morning Message July 7, 2013
“Glorious Gratitude”
Luke 17:11-10

¹¹ Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance ¹³ and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” ¹⁴ When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. ¹⁵ One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹ Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

The purpose of the four gospels is to show us Jesus. This morning we are going to take yet another look at our Lord through the words of Luke the physician. The power of God’s Word is amazing. It not only reveals Jesus, but it also reveals our thoughts and intentions.

I invite you to walk with me through this passage. Along the way, I have some observations and thoughts. When we get to the end of the passage, I have a couple of applications to bring it all together. So let’s get started.

¹¹ Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. Jerusalem. The center of worship. The celebration of Passover. The place that Jesus would give His life for sinners. He was on His way to fulfill His ultimate mission and purpose for coming to earth – to offer His life as a sacrifice for sinners on a Roman cross. He came into this world for this purpose; to redeem His people by dying for their sins. John the Baptist cried “Behold the Lamb of God”. Our deepest problem is that we are sinners. It is our nature, and it shows up in our actions. Because God is righteous, just and holy, there is only one way He can respond to sinners – judgment and death. You, like every other human being, is born into this world separated and alienated from God. Our desire is to live for ourselves and for our own fulfillment. We have no desire to seek God and glorify Him. We go our own way and do our own thing. God’s glory is the last thing that has our interest. In our minds, our life and this world is all about us. God grants life to each person. We all take our life for granted and then use it for our own purpose and satisfaction. We totally miss the purpose for our existence. All of creation has but one divine purpose, to magnify and glorify the Creator. God is not mocked or frustrated. Every knee will ultimately bow and declare Him Lord. From Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. But as sinners, we all go our own way and take our own path away from God and His purpose.

This is why Jesus had to go to Jerusalem. He had to pay the penalty for our transgression and blot out our sins. He had to go to take the judgment and punishment we deserved so that we

could be forgiven, re-created, and restored. He did it to form a people rescued from their sins for the purpose of glorifying God. Jesus was the perfect display of the truth and grace of God in human flesh. His healing and miracles demonstrated the powerful kindness and mercy of God toward sinners. And now, on His way to Jerusalem, he enters a village somewhere between Galilee and Samaria, and in the distance he hears the desperate cries of ten men who had leprosy.

¹² *As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance*
¹³ *and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"*

What was it like to be a leper at the time of Jesus? Who were these ten men, and what was their story? We know that because of their disease, they had been declared unclean and isolated from the community. They were rejects, and had to go about and warn people to keep their distance, lest they be contaminated by their uncleanness. They went about crying out "Unclean" to warn people to stay away from them. It seems that these ten men traveled together, and one was a Samaritan. Samaritans were despised by orthodox Jews. They were heretical half breeds that were considered to be traitors of the Jewish nation. But isn't it interesting that suffering and sickness bring people together to one low shared level of survival. Their religious and political differences were no priority. They all suffered a life of loneliness and isolation. Luke states that they stood at a distance and cried for mercy and pity from the only One who could change their state.

This story is a picture of each and every one of us before we meet Jesus. We are lonely. We are rejected. We are alienated from the warmth and security of the acceptance by God and His people. We are damaged goods. Oh, many hide it well. Some even appear successful and fulfilled in life even though they have no true relationship with God and His people. But beneath the superficial layers of pleasure and self-satisfaction lies an uncleanness that alienates us from God and other people. Can you see the universal need of the cleansing power of Jesus Christ? The good news is that He sees you, and He offers that cleansing and blessing to anyone who will cry out to Him and ask Him help.

These men had heard about this Jesus who opened blind eyes, and restored withered limbs, and even raised people from the dead. They recognized the authority and the power of Jesus to help them. They called Him Master. They were desperate for help, and cried for pity. They were hopeless, and now had hope for a new life. No more alienation. No more rejection. No more despair. Is it really possible to be clean and restored. He is here.

¹⁴ *When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.*

What amazing words... When he saw them. Jesus sees. Jesus responds. He recognizes and knows your need. He hears your heart and your cry for mercy. And He told them what to do to receive His healing grace. Go show yourselves to the priests. Jesus often called people to take action to demonstrate their faith in Him. The only reason these men would go to the priests is because they believed they would be cleansed. And they went believing that they would be healed and declared clean. They trusted Jesus, and as they obeyed Him, they were cleansed of their leprosy. The great physician heard their cry for mercy, granted their petition, and set them

free. These men were clean and free from this devastating disease. They had been granted a brand new lease on life. They could now embrace and touch others and experience human affection. They were no longer social outcasts. They could go to the temple and worship. They could live a full life and work and be a part of the community. Clean and free and well.

Is this not a picture of people today when they come to Jesus for help? He sees them, and He tells them through His Word what to do, and they respond, and he helps them. He restores broken marriages. He brings hope to people in deep depression. He meets their needs. He welcomes back the wayward who have drifted away. He restores runaways back to a loving community of people that care about them. It is a picture of the person who prays and asks God for help, and God helps them. It represents multitudes of people that come to churches and missions around the world and get food, and help, and shelter, and compassion, and love, and a safe place. Beloved, it is a picture of our kind and gracious Father who grants grace and mercy and kindness to people every day. He cares and He answers. And how do they respond?

¹⁵ One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

One man turned and came back to Jesus, and with a loud voice he praised the merciful and kind God of heaven. He fell at the feet of the Master and thanked the One who had released him from his misery. The voice that had yelled “unclean, unclean” for years was now shouting the praises of the God and thanking the Master for mercy. Using his words and his mouth and voice, he expressed his heart of gratitude and appreciation. He took the time to recognize the glory and power of the One who had given him a new life.

At this point in the story, here is a question that comes to my mind: How have I responded when the God of heaven has blessed me? What words have I spoken to Him and others for all of the many ways that He has answered my cries for help? How do I express my gratitude and appreciation for His goodness and kindness in my life? Am I more likely to use my voice to speak out and praise Him, or do I hide my light under a basket? Could it be that I don't talk about it because I haven't even talked to Him? How often does the goodness and kindness of God bring me to my knees? When was the last time that I fell at the feet of my Savior in worship and thanksgiving? I pray that these questions will penetrate your soul and spirit as they have mine. Now listen to Jesus' question. Allow it to ring in your ears and your heart.

¹⁷ Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?”

Let these words hang in the air. Allow the Spirit of God to bring to your mind the times that you neglected to even say thank you. This is the question that prompted this message, as I have examined my own heart, and as I consider our church. Where are the other nine? When the pastor asks on Sunday evening what the Lord been doing in our lives this week, and there is dead silence. Where are the nine? When we come to a time of corporate prayer and there is sparse gratitude and thanksgiving for all He has done and continues to do every moment of every day for each and every one of us. Where are the nine? Beloved, where are our minds and our hearts

and our affections when the opportunity to give praise and thanksgiving for what He has done? God is passionate for His glory. The lack of praise is deafening. Where are the nine?

But Dave, you don't understand. It is really difficult for me to speak in front of people and pray out loud. Beloved, that is not the issue. I am not here this morning to condemn you. If you are in Christ, and you have been accepted by Him, there is no condemnation toward you. I understand that we are all different and many people are not comfortable speaking or praying in the public. The question in my mind this week has been that there are many of us who can and do speak that stay silent. I do believe that He gives all of us the opportunity to open our mouths and extol His praises and glory to someone. My question for you is are you thanking Him out loud when you are alone with Him? Is that happening, and if not, why not? This is a question coming from our Savior. He wants to know, where are the nine? Were not all ten cleansed? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?

The question is how can you use your words and life to praise the God of heaven and proclaim His goodness and glory? What I have seen about myself is that I am often busy enjoying the gifts and have forgotten the Giver. I am busy living my life and have forgotten the One who gave me life. At other times I'm distracted with the unbelief of worrying about tomorrow. There are other times that I fall into the sin of discontentment and allow my feelings of dissatisfaction and discontent to shut down my gratitude. I want more. It can all be summed up in this one statement. I am just moving too fast and need to slow down and consider the incredible goodness, mercy and kindness of God in my life, starting with the cross. Where were these 9 lepers? They were somewhere else enjoying and living their new life. Now set free from their problem, they have lots to do and don't have time to stop and say thank you and praise the Lord.

Beloved, I am calling time out this morning! Stop the game. Let's turn around and run back to the feet of our Savior, and let's confess our sin of ingratitude and then praise and thank Him. Then let's talk about Jesus and His blessings and His goodness and His salvation and His healing and His comfort and His kingdom and His promises and His provision and His strength and His power and His love and His might and His glory and His beauty and His kindness and more and more and more to more and more people. Are you with me? Where are the nine? They were all blessed. You have been blessed. You are blessed this morning to hear the gospel. You are blessed to be seated and standing with the people of God. And we are blessed as a called out assembly. It's time to speak up and brag about the One who gave it all. It's time to tell people that we know that there is a Savior, and He has a group of people called by His name that love Him and love others. Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and glory and dominion.

Are you hearing the voice of your shepherd? Are you hearing the head of the church speaking through His Word? He is asking, where are the nine? Where have you been when there is a call for thanksgiving and praise? We certainly do offer thanksgiving and celebrate the goodness of God at WBC. But we do it far too little. He deserves so much more. 10 men were cleansed that day. Only one returned. Where were the nine? God is exhorting you to step away from the majority, to leave the 9, and join the ones who are singing God's praise from their heart; the one who will tell her friends about the goodness of God; the ones who are ready and

prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope that they display. Beloved, the Father is passionate for His praise and His glory and the glory of His Son. He is seeking true worshippers. We are called to be a kingdom of priests that fall at His feet with hearts full of gratitude, extolling His majesty, holiness, and grace. The Lord is calling each of us today to turn around and come back to join the one who is worshiping at the feet of Jesus.

This is the outcome.

¹⁹ Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

The literal translation in verse 19 is *your faith has saved you*. I really believe that the one who returned was the only one who had also been cleansed from His sins. I really believe that this Samaritan was the only one of the group that entered the kingdom. The implication is sobering and chilling.

God is kind and gracious to everyone. The Scripture teaches that Jesus died for the world, specifically for those who believe. In what sense has Jesus died for everyone? Think about it. Apart from the death of Christ, the Father would have no basis for His longsuffering and temporal kindness, mercy and goodness toward sinners. A righteous, holy God must have a sound basis to bless His enemies. Sinners rightfully deserve one thing from God – judgment and death. However, sinners throughout the world receive many good things in this life. They have food to eat. They all have air to breathe. Even the gift of life itself is an undeserved grace. Most of us have been given even more – a roof over our heads, a source of livelihood, the ability to work and earn a living. Most of us have people who love us and care about us. All of these are undeserved gifts of kindness that come from God. We all have the blessing of the beauty of creation that displays the glory and greatness of our Creator. This common grace and kindness could only come to us because of the sacrifice of Christ.

Ten lepers received the mercy of Jesus and were healed by the supernatural power of God in this story. God was gracious and kind to all of them. Every person who regularly attends a good church experiences the blessing of God. They hear God's instruction and Word. They are with kind and loving people who care about their wellbeing. They have people to share in their struggles, and help carry their burdens. A true church of God is a great place to be!

But here is the sobering reality. A person can have all these blessings; they can taste of heavenly blessing, and experience the goodness of God, and be eternally lost. Only one leper gave evidence that he was truly saved. Nine of them accepted the gift of healing and never uttered a word of thanksgiving and praise to the One who provided it. This is the message today: You can experience the temporal mercy and kindness of God and die in your sins. Listen to this warning from Hebrews 6:4-8

⁴ It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age ⁶ and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

⁷ Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for

whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. ⁸ But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.

There are people who taste heavenly gifts, taste the goodness of God's word, and even experience the power of God in their life and are still lost. Many people go to church, and receive the blessings and love of being with God's people. They live a better life because they hear the principles of Scripture, follow their teaching, and reap the benefits. Yet they could be headed for eternal destruction. Unenlightened sinners confuse the enjoyment of God's blessing and creation with true worship and fellowship with God. Nine out of ten men in this story received the physical healing touch of Jesus, yet only one was truly set free from His sins and saved. Only one fulfilled God's purpose of bringing praise and glory to the Son of God. Many think that because they have tasted heavenly gifts and are among the people of God, and drink from a communion cup, and have submitted to the waters of baptism, that they are saved. However, in their hearts there is no genuine heartfelt gratitude that shows up in sincere praise and worship and glory given to God. What is in the heart will eventually come out of the mouth. And actions speak even louder than words alone. The scripture says that there are those who have a form of godliness – religion, but are still unchanged in their hearts and motivations. God's glory and purpose holds no importance to them. Their life is about them and not about Him.

The world is filled with people who have experienced the common grace of God. They enjoy food, and shelter, and life, and love, and happiness. Many have a joyful life. Others come and experience the blessing of a church, yet only offer a token thanksgiving to God. They behold the wonder and beauty creation, but don't worship the Creator. They come and take what God offers, but remain consumed with their own life and agenda. They fall prey to the hideous delusion that they must be ok with God because He has been so good to them. Do you see it? Do you understand? There were ten men that were healed, and only one man really got it. Nine men experienced the mercy and pity of Jesus and were still lost.

So what about the one who did return? He was a Samaritan. From a religious perspective, he was the most unlikely. You would think that the most knowledgeable theologically correct person would be the one that would see the truth. But he was a foreigner. He was the one outside of the church walls. It was the unorthodox one that came and glorified God and was saved by his simple and humble faith. He not only recognized the Jesus was willing and able to heal him, He truly recognized Jesus for who He is and what He deserved. He saw Jesus as the Messiah of God, worthy of worship and praise and glory. And that concludes the story.

There are two lessons I see for us to take away from this today.

The first lesson is a call for all of us to examine closely and be sure that we have not mistaken the goodness of God in our lives for the salvation of God. If you are not sure, ask Him to show you the truth about your condition. Come to Him, and bow down low, and worship Him. Praise Him and thank Him for His goodness in your life. Don't just come and ask Him to bless you and help you. Come and offer your whole life as a sacrifice, and ask Him to take your whole life to

use as He pleases. Don't just bring Him your problems, bring yourself – completely. Totally surrender your life into His care and control. That is saving faith and repentance. Salvation is more than praying and asking God for help. It is a total surrender of your life to the Lordship and control of Jesus Christ. It is a forsaking of my own righteous attempts to impress God, and receiving the sacrifice of Christ in my behalf. It is recognizing that you need more than just His help and His blessing, you need a complete transformation and a new heart to praise Him and worship Him. You need a substitute and a Savior. If you have never totally given yourself to God, I encourage you to do that today. STORY OF GAIL.

Second, I want to speak specifically to the members of WBC, As we gather together at various times, in corporate worship on Sunday morning, and family fellowship on Sunday evening, and in home fellowships, and prayer meetings, and Sunday School, and Bible Studies, Jesus is asking the question: Where are the 9? He is calling on us today to cultivate a burning heart of love and gratitude for who He is and all He has given us, and He wants us to talk about it. He first wants us to talk to Him and thank Him...out loud. He wants us to speak up and express our praise and gratitude for Him and what He is doing in and through us to each other. The gathering of the church is first and foremost to bring Him glory together. Beloved, we have been given so much at WBC, and I sense that we sometimes take it for granted. We need to repent of our presumption and lack of appreciation and begin to lift our voices in gratitude for all that He does for us and all He has given us as a church. He is calling us to open our mouths and use our voices to bring Him praise and glory. Specifically, I believe He wants us to fill every room of this building with stories of all the good things that He is doing in our lives and in our ministries. We need to open our mouths and boldly praise Him for all that He is doing in our lives and in the lives of people we touch. It is a time to quit being silent and speak. He is worthy of our praise and thanksgiving. We need to boast – not in ourselves, but in the Lord. We need to be talking about the grace and goodness of God that we see at work in each other. We need to recognize the work of God in one another and then tell each other what we see going on. I realize we are doing this at a certain level. I know that God wants more. He wants us to be a church that is filled with glorious gratitude.

Let's close by joining our voices on a small chorus of thanksgiving for our salvation.