

Sunday, October 11, 2020

Deuteronomy 8:7-18 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 Luke 17:11-19

### Giving Thanks in All Things

When was the last time you said, “Thank you” to any one? When was the last time you really meant it? Sometimes when handed something we have automatic responses—our hand receives the item and our mouth automatically speaks and says, Thank you! The question we need to ask is, did we mean it?

In these last months we’ve seen an outpouring of thanks for essential workers- in the midst of the first wave of covid19- there were tributes to health care workers, food producers, grocery workers and truck drivers galore. We still see some signs up but they are not as prevalent because many people thought this pandemic would be over within a month! We need to continue to thank each other as well because most of us listened to the medical health directives to stay safe. So thank you!

It is Thanksgiving and traditionally we are able to gather in large numbers to feast together in the abundance of God’s harvest blessings. We are truly blessed here in Canada because our stores and warehouses are full and we need not worry about our food supply this winter. But unfortunately, this is not the case for all people!

Our reading from Deuteronomy 8, occurs as God’s people are preparing to enter the Promised Land and they are being reminded about what their journey has included for the last 40 years. These people have undergone a journey which has included many tests of faith, trials living on the road for so long as well as the challenges of not being settled where they could call home. Each generation has had to learn to be humble before God as they learn to move their mindset from slaves to a free nation. They needed to be reminded that God was in charge. They needed to come before God and acknowledge Him with hope. God was disciplining the people and calling them to live by His laws. God taught that they would be able to enter the promised land but they would have to live by his commandments, his ordinances and his statutes. He also taught them that through faith in Him, they would gain wealth and be blessed. They are to remember from where they came and give thanks to God.

Just think about your life for a moment. Do you recall when you came to know God personally through Jesus? Do you remember what your life was like before and since? How

often do you pause, reflect and pray to offer God thanks? God's Spirit in some form or other has touched yours and you have been forever changed. Do you thank God for this?

Luke tells the story of what happened on the road between Samaria and Galilee as Jesus and his followers are making their way to Jerusalem. They are walking into a little unnamed village where those cast out of the community are waiting for Jesus. They have heard conversations of people making their way to and from Jerusalem about this man Jesus and how he has changed lives. Social distancing was the common practise at this time as those who were diseased and particularly diseases of the skin approached people but kept six feet apart. They call out to him by name, "Jesus". They acknowledge his position of authority, "Master". Then they ask, "Have mercy on us!" This was a group effort by these ten people. Then Jesus saw them and immediately told them to go into the village and show themselves to the priest. For it was the priest who had the authority to cast out or welcome the sick and healed in the synagogue and community. They were on their way to see the priest. But something amazing happened. They were healed. Their skin was healthy. One of the men looked at himself, realized he was healed and turned around. He ran back to Jesus and as he ran he praised God. When he got close to Jesus, he bowed down to him and thanked him. He was healed. This Samaritan man had been healed by Jesus and he offered his praise and thanks to God and the Master Jesus.

A crowd had gathered when Jesus had stopped by the community outcasts. They saw what had happened. Jesus then asked to whoever was listening, "Didn't I heal the whole group of those lepers? Only one man came back to give thanks. Where are the others?" We know that Jesus sent them to the priest to be welcomed into the community again, but did they not realize what had happened as they left? What seemed to be more important to them was to get back into the community instead of thanking the One who made it possible. The one who had returned to Jesus to give thanks was then told to get up and go because his faith had made him well.

We often forget to thank the One who changes lives not only physically but spiritually, emotionally, and mentally as well. The lepers asked, "Lord have mercy upon us." And when Jesus saw their needs they were healed. Sometimes we might think, God already knows what we need before we ask, so why pray? The man who was healed, looked at himself and saw that he was healed. In that moment he realized his life would be changed forever. He was moved from within to go back to Jesus who had healed him. And by this action, Jesus acknowledged his faith in God, and the man thanked the Master and Healer for the blessings he received.

Paul teaches us in our reading from Second Corinthians 9 that God blesses us in abundance so that we will have enough of everything. It is not just given, but one must sow and reap and how we do this makes a difference in what we receive. Sowing and reaping is not just in the sense of planting seeds in the spring and reaping the harvest in the fall, but how we give of ourselves to help others. We're not to give because we have to or ought to, but because we are filled with the inner desire to give out of and with joy. This comes from the knowledge that God has planted in us the seeds of faith to grow and be abundant. It is by the Spirit which moves us to experience joy from within. This joy is because Jesus has made himself known and we in turn have realized that he died and rose for us. The leper who was healed realized right away that he was well. Immediately, he felt the joy and wonder of the gift he had received and needed to tell Jesus thank you. Jesus received the thanks and told him why he was healed—because of his faith. Then the man ran to tell the priest. One can understand his reaction as he shouts and praises his way into the village. His life was forever changed.

Do you realize how blessed we are? What are you doing in response? That man was healed, his faith was acknowledged, he was going to gain access in the community and he was truly thankful. He did not have anything to give to Jesus but he gave his most heartfelt prayer when he bowed down and said, "Thank you." We receive out of God's abundance many gifts. But as Paul writes, "there is one unspeakable indescribable gift' which is salvation. This gift is not to be take for granted, but to be received by us freely. This gift is the promise of eternal life. The healed Samaritan man bowed down and thanked Jesus for being healed. Have we earnestly prayed those same words of thanks for the gift of salvation and promise of eternal life? Maybe it is time to do this and by remembering we can know again that feeling from within, the joy that cannot be contained. The joy of knowing we belong to God through Jesus our Saviour.

God loves you and is as we give thanks for His many blessings, we need to also give to others the gift hope and promise of a fuller relationship with God and the promise of eternal life. By healing the man with leprosy, this man received hope for a new and different life. As we hear more about God's love and blessings given to us, we need to give thanks because he is the one who made all things possible. God continues to change people we need only to believe, have faith and to trust him. Let us rejoice in this as we share in *prayer*:

God of grace and love, thank you. Thank you for all that you give to us and we often take for granted. Thank you also that you give to us the gift of salvation in Jesus. Enable us to offer our thanks because Jesus lived and died for our sakes. Hear now the prayers of thanksgiving we offer to you in this time of silence. <SILENCE> Amen.