

Sunday, October 8, 2023 *“Giving Thanks Wholeheartedly”*

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 Luke 17: 11-19

“May Your Thanksgiving be bountiful for reasons to be Grateful!” This is an amazing greeting that may be shared but what is at the heart of this statement? Giving thanks for something/ someone or an action to be done. What does it mean to Give Thanks? We often associate this expression of gratitude, especially to God because we have a relationship with the One who created all things. But what does mean to give thanks today? The Oxford dictionary states that one “gives thanks’ in an annual national holiday marked by religious observances and a traditional meal including turkey. The holiday commemorates a harvest festival celebrated by the Pilgrims in 1621, and is held in the US on the fourth Thursday in November and similarly in Canada, usually on the second Monday in October. But just what are we doing and more importantly what is ‘giving thanks’.

Our reading from Luke 17 finds Jesus entering a small village where 10 lepers approach him. These 10 people who have been banished to live on the street for their disease of the skin. These men have nothing except anything they receive from begging in the street as people enter the village. Because they see Jesus and know who he is we must realize that they have been living in the street and they have heard of him. As a group, they approach him and call out from a safe distance, “Jesus, Master Have mercy on us.” They knew who Jesus was because people talked about Jesus. They knew what he could do for them. They knew that they could approach him but cautiously did so and they called him by name Jesus. They also called him “Master” teacher for they had also learned what he had been doing in the region to help others. But what they ask for is not what we might ask- to be healed but they asked for mercy. “Have mercy on us.” They asked for Jesus’ compassion, and hoped that he would act with sympathy, kindness, forgiveness, and love and do something to help. Then Jesus looked at them, no- he saw them. He saw them for who they were- people in need of healing and hope; people in need of a change in their circumstances of life. When he saw them, he said “Go and show yourselves to the priests”. Jesus knew that these men would not be welcomed into the community until they were healed from leprosy. They would not be cared for or loved again until the priests’ declared they were whole or well.

So these men ran and as they went, they were made clean. In a true healing miracle, the 10 men were cleansed of leprosy. And with this healing of their body, they were given a chance at a new life with family and friends. They need no longer live in streets, beg for existence and keep their distance from others. They could be with family, work and eat with others and truly just live and be held in love.

But what is amazing that one of the men looked at himself, saw that he was healed and instead of running with the rest, turned back. He went back to where Jesus was standing and praised God with a loud voice. He knelt down at Jesus' feet and thanked him. Amazingly enough- he was a Samaritan—but he knew who Jesus was and was not afraid!

Then Jesus speaks to this now healed Samaritan man and asks, "Were not 10 made clean? Where are the other 9? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? Then he said to this man, "Get up and go on your way your faith has made you well."

10% of those whom Jesus healed gave thanks to him and in his words—he was a foreigner; not even from the area! Did the other 9 know of Jesus as a child and only thought maybe it could be possible to be healed by him? Did they know something about Jesus the Samaritan didn't? Why not give thanks for the changes their life could now have?

How often do we really give thanks? Not just on the weekend designated for this- but really offer thanks to others for what they do and have done!

Thanks= giving giving=thanks. What does give thanks mean? There are three things tied to its meaning according to Ken Kuykendall. 1) Assess what do I have? 2) Acknowledge where do I get it and 3) Appreciate- how can I repay?

1) Assess your circumstances- Who are the people in your life? What are the material provisions and possessions you have? What about your personal health? And where are you nurtured in your faith- your church home and church family. For what are you grateful?

2) Acknowledge from where do you get what fills your life? From hard work, gifts from others, blessings from God, combination of all

3) Appreciate sharing and showing appreciation to the One who abundantly gives daily to our needs, and even our desires. How do we acknowledge our gratitude.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes to the church about sowing and reaping and how what we sow is in proportion or ratio to what one reaps. If we sow only a few seeds we can only expect so much; but if we sow abundantly the yield will be much higher. But we are called to sow and reap according to the ability we have in giving to others. God will bless us but we must do our part. "You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity which will produce thanksgiving to God through us." But you must be willing to give of yourself and in turn offer to God your praise and prayers of thanksgiving.

As we come together this Thanksgiving we are reminded of the words of PSALM 100
Through this Psalm a clearer understanding is shared upon what we can do to "give thanks" to God.

1. Be Heard – make a joyful noise unto the Lord
2. Be Happy – serve the Lord with gladness
3. Be Humble – know the Lord has made us, and not we ourselves
4. Be Holy – enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise
5. Behold – the Lord is good, merciful, and longsuffering

What is being asked of us as faithful followers of Jesus is this? Have you been blessed? Have you received gifts from God and others? Give thanks. Give thanks with a grateful heart. A heart that is filled with happiness, humility and hope. For when you give thanks wholeheartedly there is joy and peace in all who experience the wonder of God's Spirit.

Wholeheartedly thankfulness- means reviewing your life and how you interact with others. It means falling at Jesus' feet from time to time and offering thanks to him for his gift of eternal life and it means telling others of why you are grateful today.

Giving thanks= thanks giving.. let us rejoice as we praise God for his many blessings!
Thank you. God!