

Title: THE VIRTUE OF GRATITUDE, LUKE 17:11-19  
(Chatham, NJ; 10/13/13, AM) [Pt – Topical]

Theme: A thankful heart keeps us in tune with God and prepares us for spiritual growth.

Purpose: To demonstrate the role of thanksgiving in healing our hearts and preparing us for life in the Kingdom of God on earth.

Introduction:

1. Next week we begin Forty Days of Prayer; the theme is giving thanks.
2. This story of the Ten Lepers, though familiar, is found only in Luke and is about thanksgiving.
3. Jesus is headed to Jerusalem and is somewhere between Samaria and Galilee.
4. That may tell us why the make up of the group is mixed: Jews and Samaritan(s).
5. A ten percent ratio of thanks is small and may indicate how thanksgiving is in short supply.

#### I. The Virtue of Giving Thanks, Luke 17:11-19

- A. Jesus is surprised that only one possessed a thankful heart.
  1. A group of lepers plead for healing while standing far off
  2. He tells them to go show themselves to the priest; this accords with Old Testament practice, Lev. 13:19 & 14:1-11
  3. He never tells them not to tell anyone else
  4. Only one returns to thank him; he was a Samaritan
  5. Lots of questions remain about the behavior of the other nine
  6. Why didn't the others come with him? Did they go to the priest as commanded?
  7. Like the Good Samaritan, a foreigner displays the love of God more than the children of the covenant
- B. Why not be thankful
  1. As a leper he was destined for a life of ostracism and disease
  2. Now a new life awaited him with all its possibilities and joys
  3. When lots of bad things happen, when people behave in their sinful, hateful ways, and when life doesn't always hold a lot of promise, we are tempted to be cynical
  4. A cynic is a person who attributes everyone's actions to selfish motives
  5. Taking it a step further, we are tempted to see only the worst outcomes even when the situation may not result directly from people's motives
  6. At some point we persistently fail to see the good, and we expect the bad
  7. Furthermore, when good happens we aren't thankful
  8. But we can learn gratitude; a thankful heart can be acquired by practicing thanksgiving

#### II. Seeing the Kingdom in Your Midst

- A. The Pharisees ask Jesus about the Kingdom
  1. In your midst or within you: translated either way
  2. Contextually "in your midst" fits with what Jesus is saying and to whom he addresses this
  3. The Pharisees generally have never accepted the authority of Jesus
  4. They don't believe that he is the harbinger of the Kingdom and the new age
  5. They never fully prepared their hearts, Luke 3:7-9
- B. Not to be missed
  1. Colossians 1:13 – a present reality

2. Repentance prepares the heart to receive God
3. Thanksgiving prepares the heart to see the good when it happens
4. It can see good even in the midst of evil
5. In anxious moments, it allows us to imagine the possibilities

### III. Don't look for signs

- "The Kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed" (20)
- Jesus' statement to the Pharisees is that it is already here, in your midst
- By implication he means they are missing it
- They had set themselves up for failure when God didn't act in their preconceived way
- They needed proofs from God
- Do we turn to anger, cynicism, and despair when God doesn't "prove himself" to us?
- In 2 Peter 3:3-7, God didn't come according to their timetable; the scoffing and grievances are deliberate
- In 1 Tim. 1:5-7, worthwhile activity (love from a pure heart, good conscience, and sincere faith) is thwarted by "vain discussions" (6)
- Being thankful plays a role in helping us to see what is good, how God wants us to live, and keeping us satisfied with how God is working

### Conclusions:

1. Thanksgiving prepares our heart to receive God's blessings.
2. By it we receive grace and forgiveness.
3. It helps us to see the good and the possible, Phil. 4:6; prayers are accompanied by thanksgiving.
4. "Forty Days" begin on Saturday.
5. Develop and grow a thankful heart.