

Title: TEN PERCENT GRATEFUL, LUKE 17:11 – 19
(Chatham, NJ; 10/9/16, AM) [Pc – Narrative Analysis]

Theme: Through the experience of ten lepers we learn that gratitude is one of the characteristics of true worship although it is in short supply.

Purpose: To examine the motivations of the lepers and to extol the gratitude of the one who thanked Jesus for his healing.

Introduction:

1. By examining the details of this episode, we uncover some insights that may help develop more gratitude.
2. Unique to Luke, this episode stands almost in contrast to the context where Jesus has been teaching and lecturing about a number of issues: his mission, wealth, etc.
3. Here we learn from the experience and character of a foreign-born leper.
4. This particular episode stood out.
5. We will look at it from three angles: the setting, the suspense, and the surprise.

I. The Setting

A. Geography

1. On the way to Jerusalem (9:51) – his destination as well as his destiny
2. In this chapter we find him somewhere “between Samaria and Galilee”
3. The land of Samaria was “hill country” so we can imagine what it looked like
4. Geography has not been critical up to this point but here it may give us some indication about the population
5. This was a part of Palestine where Jews and Samaritans intermingled
6. Jesus was about to enter a village; we don’t know which side of the border

B. Society

1. We know the religious and racial tension between the two groups
2. The Samaritans: after ten of the twelve tribes of ancient Israel were taken into captivity, the land was resettled with foreigners and they intermarried with those who were left, thus the Samaritans weren’t full Israelites
3. They maintained only some elements of Jewish religion and traditions, but their religion had been co-mingled and compromised; see John 4:22
4. The two groups did not mix well
5. Now we must imagine the lepers for ourselves
6. Remember that Jesus is not alone; he is accompanied by the apostles and many others; you are in the crowd

II. The Suspense: every story has a conflict, what the protagonist(s) must overcome

A. The outcasts

1. Part of the suspense here occurs when these lepers cry out to Jesus
2. Their very presence creates tension and fear of infection
3. As a part of the crowd, you might think to yourself, “I hope they don’t come any closer.” You can almost feel the crowd tense up when they speak.
4. Though we don’t know the makeup of the group, leprosy has broken down religious and social barriers: Jews and Samaritans have mixed
5. Yet they are alienated from society by law: though there to protect the community, I’ve little doubt about their feeling like outcasts
6. They yelled, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”
7. They knew who he was and his reputation for healing
8. Jesus does not hesitate, “Go show yourselves to the priest.” This too was prescribed by law for a leper’s healing.

B. Healing

1. On their way to the priests, the healing occurred
2. Presumably this would have been a witness to the priests of Jesus' healing power.
3. But this is where the conflict of their unhealed and alienated lives turned into a surprise.

III. The Surprise(s)

A. "I'm healed"

1. Jesus' power was well-known so the disciples are not surprised and the reader as well is not surprised
2. The lepers, however, may have been surprised when it actually happened
3. I'm not sure just how much they believed it would happen
4. Get a picture of their diseased bodies suddenly cleansed
5. But one of them was moved and elated
6. His surprise immediately develops into thanksgiving
7. He praises God with a loud voice and falls at Jesus' feet
8. What was the crowd's reaction? Did they realize who he was? Might they have been initially resistant to having the man come close?

B. Gratitude: the biggest surprise

1. The leper thanked Jesus
2. I'm not sure Jesus expected any of them to return
3. But when one does, he is surprised at the missing nine
4. He expresses surprise that only a "foreigner" comes back to thank him
5. I suspect the disciples are surprised to see a Samaritan demonstrate what their fellow Jews should have done. Were they even a little embarrassed?
6. The big surprise is for the reader: gratitude is in short supply
7. But are we so surprised?

Conclusion:

1. Worship and gratitude go hand in hand.
2. Gratitude is a learned behavior.
3. It comes from being able to see what God has done for us.
4. You don't need to be healed of leprosy; you just need to be saved.
5. Accept the Gospel of forgiveness and you'll know what it means to be thankful.