

Giving Thanks

Lk. 17:11-19

Introduction:

1. A man was writing at the Post Office desk. An elderly man approached him and asked if he would address a post card for him. The man agreed and did so. Then the elderly man asked, "Will you write this message on the card?" He repeated the message and the man put it on the card. "And sign it," the elderly man requested.

"Is there anything else I can do for you?" said the scribe. "Oh," said the other. Put a P.S. on the bottom. It should say, "Please excuse the handwriting."

2. Ingratitude in the face of graciousness galls us.

3. Yet sometimes we just don't think to give thanks. Perhaps that's the way it was with these nine lepers. Maybe they meant to go back but were so overwhelmed with their healing that they were distracted.

4. Sometimes we are so thrilled with our gifts that we forget the source of them. If someone proposed that we meet this coming Saturday to thank God for all the blessings that He has given us we might just complain, "I've made plans for Saturday. I am going to be with my family then. We are celebrating the opening of the state parks and we have been at home for the past several weeks with this Covid scare and we need to get out."

While making plans with those closest to us have we forgotten who has blessed us with such privilege?

Discussion:

I. Giving thanks is one of the most fundamental acts of worship (Rom. 1:21).

A. We sometimes speak of "the five acts of worship:" preaching, singing, praying, contributing, partaking of the Lord's supper.

1. First, I don't know where Scripture has limited worship to these five acts.

2. Giving thanks is an act of worship that perhaps we should add to our list (Heb. 12:28).

B. Even those who had no written revelation from God should have given thanks (Rom. 1:21).

C. 2 Tim. 3:2 identifies ungratefulness as among the sins of those who are ensnared by the devil (1-4).

D. In Gulliver's Travels, Jonathan Swift gives us his opinion of those who are ungrateful to their friends and those who give them gifts when he describes the laws of the Lilliputians. "Ingratitude is reckoned among them a capital crime; for they reason thus, that whoever makes ill return to his benefactors must needs be a common enemy to the rest of mankind, from which he hath received no obligation. And, therefore, such a man is not fit to live." The idea is that if a person does ill to the one who has helped him what will he do to those who have not? That person must despise all mankind.

II. God does not determine his giving on the basis of our thankfulness.

- A. God did not heal only one leper, but ten.
 - 1. The nine who failed to express thanks were healed too.
 - 2. God is not gracious simply to those who are thankful (Matt. 5:45).
- B. Thank God that He is not just gracious to those who are thankful or we could never be forgiven (Rom. 5:6-8).
- C. We are not to determine our giving on the basis of whether or not another is thankful for what we have done for them.
 - 1. A businessman said, "People are ingrates. It took me 61 years to find it out. I have 175 employees, men and women. At Thanksgiving, I sent them 175 choice turkeys. Only four thanked me. Two thanked me by notes and two said, 'Thank you' when they met me in the hall. Because of their thanklessness, I've decided never to go out of my way to be nice again." Fact is most of us think like he did.
 - 2. Someone said, "If you want to find gratitude look for it in the dictionary."
 - 3. Perhaps we should look at it differently. God is not giving for what He can get out of it, but He is happy to see the benefit to the receiver. That's where we need to grow to be. But thanksgiving is appropriate and maybe that is why we are put out by thanklessness.
 - 4. I have learned that sometimes the communication of thankfulness is delayed. I am humbled when I complained that someone was not thankful only to have them thank me in a very gracious way.
- D. It does feel good to be thanked.
 - 1. I remember a lady that our family helped some years ago when she was under-going financial stress. A year or so later I received an invitation to her wedding. We had only met one time, but she had kept our contact information. I felt privileged to have been invited.
 - 2. A young woman took her three children into a diner for breakfast. It was crowded and they had to sit separately. Must not have been during the Covid scare. Eight-year-old Mary sat at the end, by herself. When she was served she asked, "Mommy, don't people say the blessing in this place?" Silence followed. Mom was embarrassed, but before she could say anything the man behind the counter said, "Yes, we do young lady. Will you give thanks?" Mary prayed as all were silent, "God is great. God is good, let us thank Him for our food. Amen." I think God felt good about that.

III. Generally we have less problem giving than we do receiving. I had a lady who lived next door to me a long time ago, who promptly said, before we moved into the house next door to her, "I don't bother anybody and I don't expect anybody to bother me." I bought a load of dirt to make some repairs in the back yard and offered to share it with her to make repairs in her yard. She wanted to pay me for a wheelbarrow load of dirt. Sometimes receiving is hard.

- A. There is a certain pride in us that will give and give, but to accept a gift is more difficult. "I will die for the Lord. I will give my life in devotion. I will do anything, but do not humiliate me to the level of a hell-deserving sinner and then tell me that all I have to do is accept the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.

1. Let me earn it.
 2. Let me win it.”
 3. But you must receive it as a gift or you cannot have it.
- B. Perhaps the greatest blessing is the knowledge that we are spiritually destitute. Until we come to this realization the Lord is powerless. He cannot save us as long as we think we can save ourselves. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3).
- C. Thanksgiving stems from a recognition of destitution (Lk. 7:40ff).

IV. Things to be thankful for.

- A. That God hears us (Jn. 11:41). Are we complaining that God is not doing what we want?
- B. For the faith of others (Rom. 1:8). Often our focus is on complaining for their lack of faith.
- C. For the grace of God given us through Jesus Christ—enrichment and gifts (1 Cor. 1:4). Often we are jealous over other’s gifts. Complain that others don’t have our gifts.
- D. For those who share with us in the gospel (Phil. 1:3-5). Often we complain that they don’t share more.
- E. For acceptance of the word as the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13).
- F. For strength and use in God’s service (1 Tim. 1:12).
- G. For those of sincere faith (2 Tim. 1:3-5).
- H. For the love and faith others have toward the Lord and toward all the saints (Philemon 4-5).

Conclusion:

1. Will you give glory to God in thanksgiving?
2. Our Father, you have given us so much. Do give us one more thing—a grateful heart.