

Remnant Life Church  
July 14, 2024  
**The Nine or the One?**  
Luke 17:11-19

How grateful would you say you are?

- Do you focus on the positives of your situations?
- Or do you consider it your responsibility to point out the faults and shortcomings of the circumstances of everyday life to all those around you?
- Being grateful can be expressed in a couple of ways
  - One can be grateful of heart – knowing that your life is filled with blessings
  - The other is grateful of thought and word – expressing your gratitude for a particular situation or action by someone else
- But how easy is that?
  - I was raised with what many would call old-fashioned Southern manners
    - I always say please when I ask for something, and I cannot conceive of someone doing something for me or giving me something that I do not say thank you
    - I have thanked people for things that I later determined they did not even do for me
    - I am quick to apologize; I say sir and ma'am...it's just the way I was raised
  - How often do most people do that in their daily lives?
  - Is it easier to be thankful or to complain about what is not right?
  - Beyond that, is it easiest just to ignore what others might do around you and stay self-absorbed in your own little world?

God makes it very clear that we ought to live with grateful hearts and, certainly, as Christians, we should freely express that to one another and, more importantly, to God. But how often do we do that?

- It was around 2 a.m. on September 8, 1860 that a crowded passenger steamer called the Lady Elgin began to sink in Lake Michigan after colliding with the schooner Augusta near Waukegan, Ill.
  - There were more than 300 passengers on board on their way back to port after a day of sightseeing
  - The captain was not aware of the extent of the damage and continued to steam toward Milwaukee for another half hour to within sight of the shore
  - The severely compromised and weakened hull, however, could no longer support the weight of the boilers and steam engine as the bottom gave way and the ship tore in half
  - Most of the crew and passengers succumbed quickly to the frigid waters, but there were those who were able to cling to and climb onto floating debris
  - Along the shore late that night was a group of young men, among them a 17-year-old first-year Northwestern University student by the name of Edward Spenser
    - Majoring in Bible, Spenser was studying for the ministry

- He heard the anguished cries and went out into the strong undertow of the breakers and saved a woman from drowning
- An experienced swimmer, he had his friends tie a rope around his waist and went out 17 more times
  - After six hours of battling the waves and cold, his body covered with bruises and scrapes from the rope, debris, and the thrashing victims, Spenser finally collapsed unconscious on the shore
  - He had saved 18 people from death that night
- While he did survive his ordeal, he dealt with severe health issues for the rest of his life because of his actions that single night
  - And due to his health struggles, he dropped out of school, never finished his education, and, as a result, never entered the ministry
- He did live out a full life, eventually winding up in the warmth of California and lived to the age of 81
- But in his obituary published shortly after his death, his surviving brother, who was with him on the shore that night, made sure that it was reported – not one of the 18 ever sought him out to say thank you.

### READ Luke 17:11-19

During this particular journey, Jesus performs 5 miracles

- The first three of them involve a single person
- The last one involves 2 who are healed of blindness
- But this, the fourth of the 5, involves ten men who are suffering from one of the most feared and horrible diseases of that day – leprosy

The word leprosy comes from the Greek *lepis* which means scaly

- The word was used to describe a variety of skin ailments
  - Some no more than a rash
  - All the way up to the most serious, created by a bacterial infection, bacillus that attacks the nerves and skin, causing terrible sores and injury to the body because of loss of feeling
  - That particular bacterium is highly contagious, and in biblical times, a person was completely cut off from society according to the Levitical law given by Moses as a way to safeguard the people from an epidemic outbreak (**Lev 13:45-46**)
    - That is why, in verse **12**, we read that the 10 *stood at a distance*
    - Without going into graphic detail regarding their condition, I can assure you these men were desperate, if not hopeless
      - There was no cure
      - They are destined for a life of agony, isolation, and despair
      - Jesus is their last chance
    - How desperate are they? Well, notice that in verse **13**, they call Him master
      - This is the only place in the Scripture where someone other than a close follower of Jesus uses that term

- It is a word that denotes special authority and noble power – even miraculous power
    - These men must have heard of Jesus – they were aware of His reputation – they knew what He was capable of
  - Have you ever been so desperate that you were ready to try almost anything to bring about a solution?
    - That is where these 10 are
    - They are thinking they are even ready to risk being stoned for approaching people even if one of them is a rabbi – one dedicated, at all costs, to preserving the order of the Law of Moses
    - Their cry is a pitiful wail of the lost and desperate: Have mercy on us!
      - Some translations use the word pity
      - It is the cry of finality
- What always amazes me about this account is how understated it all is
  - There is no cry of “BE CLEAN!” from Jesus like He did at Lazarus’s tomb when He called Him to come out of the tomb in a loud voice
    - There was no majestic peal of thunder or flashes of lightening like when God was present on Mt. Siani during the exodus
    - Jesus did nothing demonstrative or physical like when He spit on the ground and rubbed dirt on the one blind man’s eyes
    - He did not walk up to them, He did not even say you are healed!
    - He simply gave them instructions.
      - Instructions that did not make sense
      - The Mosaic law called for a person who was healed or free of a skin rash or disease to go and show themselves to the priests to confirm the healing and to offer an offering of thanks to God
      - But that happened AFTER they were healed – these men were still lepers when they turned to leave
      - Verse 14 tells us that AS THEY WENT they were cleansed and healed of their disease
  - Why is that important to recognize?
    - Because it took great faith for these men to do what Jesus told them to do when they were obviously still in the same condition
      - We tend to focus on the failure of the 9 rather than see that they all had faith in the power of Jesus to heal them
      - But that is where the story begins to move into the second part of what took place
  - We then read that only one of the men came back to Jesus to say thank you
    - Jesus asks, Were not all ten healed?
    - IOW, why has only one come back when all 10 received the same blessing?
    - What would keep them from going back to say thank you?
- Perhaps a more difficult question to answer is what prevents us from being grateful?
  1. For some it is because it is not convenient
  2. Others are too proud to express gratitude

3. Some are too self-conscious and even uncomfortable
4. Some feel that they deserve whatever it is that is being done for them
5. Some are too busy with the everyday things of their life

But being thankful is vital to the life of a Christian

It is essential to our peace of mind

- Paul wrote in **Phil. 4:6-7** - *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*
- Giving thanks is a way to keep what is happening in your life in a proper perspective
  - I thank God when life is calm and peaceful
  - Can you thank Him in the storm for His presence, His peace, and His strengthening you?
    - I promise if you do it will change the way you see that storm
    - It will ease your heart, your mind, and your body

Thanksgiving is necessary to live within the wonderful liberty of God's grace

- Paul wrote that we are not to allow false teachers to bind us with man-made, religious rules and regulations
- *For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer (1 Tim. 4:4-5)*
  - All things were created by God and are intended for us, His creation, but always received in thanksgiving
  - Why? Because that clearly reflects the heart of the individual
    - You cannot fake a grateful heart
    - You can say the words 'thank you' but if it is not meant, it is easy to recognize
  - Gratitude directed to God for all things keeps your focus where it should be

A thankful heart is essential to enjoying the kind of fellowship with one another as Christians that God intends for us to enjoy.

- This lines up with what we talked about the past 2 Sundays as a way to guard church unity
- Paul wrote, *...but above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful (Col. 3:14-15).*
- In this context, the "peace of God" Paul spoke of was the peace in our relationships with one another; and thankfulness to God for one another is essential to that peace.

- I don't think there is any question that divisions within the church would never happen if believing people truly thanked God for one another as they should.
- Unthankfulness toward God is one of the main causes of cynicism and bitterness in our hearts.
  - The fastest cure for a chronically critical spirit is to repent of unthankfulness, and then to verbally give thanks to God.
  - I believe it is impossible to be "bitter" and "thankful" at the same time; because one attitude drives out the other.
    - That's why Paul writes; *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1Thess. 5:16-18)*
- Consider the unwavering heart of gratitude you would have if you could pray this prayer in the midst of your darkest hours and most raging storms...
  - *Almighty God, in all honesty, I don't like the situation I'm in right now, but I believe, Father, I am in it because You have allowed me to be. I affirm by faith that You love me and only allow circumstances in my life that will accomplish Your good purposes for me. I affirm that You will prove Your greatness in this circumstance and that You will receive all of the glory to Yourself. And I affirm that when all You are seeking to accomplish in me through my trials is fully accomplished, and when I finally behold all the eternal blessings You are bringing about for me as a result, I will continue to praise and thank You that You loved me so much to allow me to go through it. And so, Father, I thank You now, in the midst of this trial, for my circumstance, and for all that you are doing in it.*