



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

THE POWER OF GRATITUDE • LUKE 17:11-19 • 11/21/2021

MAIN POINT

Gratitude is the heart's memory. As Christ followers, it is essential that we maintain and thankful heart of gratitude towards God in all circumstances.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Has there ever been a time where someone did something for you that you could never repay? How did it make you feel? How did you thank that person?

What does gratitude reveal about our hearts? Do you see yourself as a grateful person?

More than any other people, Christ followers have a reason to be thankful. We have been given much in Christ and have much to be thankful for. Gratitude comes from a heart that has acknowledged dependence. We are needy people who depend Christ

for everything that we have. The life we lead in response to this truth should be one of gratitude. Often we are tempted to let our pain and hurts define us. But as we live a life empowered by gratitude towards God, it allows us to be thankful no matter what is going on in our lives.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ LUKE 17:11-14.

Why does Luke note that the lepers cried to Jesus from a distance?

What is Jesus' response to the lepers? How would another person in the first century likely respond to a leper?

In Luke 17 Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem where He would be arrested and crucified. Most Jews in Jesus' time would have taken a detour to avoid entering Samaria. The Jews considered Samaritans half-breeds who were unworthy of God's love or their friendship. However Jesus walked through Samaria rather than take the preferred (and longer) route of the day. While He was passing through, He encountered a group of ten lepers. Lepers were victims of a contagious disease that made them outcasts with no hope of a normal future. They were even forced to announce themselves to oncoming people, so as not to infect others. The lepers called to Jesus from a distance because they were aware that their contact with other people would make them unclean (Leviticus 13:42-46). These men recognized Jesus and knew that He was able to heal them. They begged for Jesus' mercy, and He responded by healing them.

Why is it significant that Jesus' encounter with Samaritans and lepers would have made Him unclean?

How does Jesus' willingness to step outside the boundaries of Jewish custom allow Him to better minister to people in need? Have you ever experienced this in your own life?

READ LUKE 17:15-19.

How did the majority of lepers respond to being healed?

Describe the Samaritan's response to being healed.

Why is it significant that the only one of the lepers who took the time to express thanks was a Samaritan?

According to Jesus, what made the Samaritan well?

Of the ten lepers only the one Samaritan returned to thank Jesus. This man did not seek a private moment with Jesus to express his gratitude. Instead he screamed praise and thanksgiving to God so everyone could hear. Not only was this person an unclean leper, but he was also an unclean Samaritan. Jesus' response lets us know that it was only the Samaritan who returned. By identifying the foreigner, Jesus showed the "superiority" of the foreign man of faith to the Jewish men who lacked faith. Jesus' statement that the man's faith had made him well indicates that the Samaritan received more than physical healing that day.

What do you think the Samaritan did after he left Jesus? Do you think he expressed his gratitude to anyone else? How can you express your gratitude towards God this week?

Jesus' encounter with the lepers not only healed them, but gave them the ability to lead a normal life. With their disease gone, they would be able to hold jobs and spend time with other people. They would no longer be forced to announce themselves from a distance to every passerby. We often think of gratitude as an inward reality, but the Samaritan's gratitude affected him in such a way that it led him to outward action.

Have you ever let gratitude motivate you in this way?

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18.

What does Paul mean when he tells the Thessalonians to be thankful in all circumstances? What does he not mean?

How are joy, prayer, and gratitude related? What role does prayer have for gratitude? How has prayer influenced your own life of gratitude?

When Paul says it is God's will in Jesus Christ for us to be thankful, what does he mean? Do you see gratitude as being this important?

Urging Christians to be thankful is a regular facet of Paul's letters (Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:15; 4:2). He saw gratitude as an essential mark of the Christian life. Paul is not insisting that Christians should thank God for every single situation in their lives, but rather, that we should continually maintain a thankful heart and attitude no matter our situation. Paul's use of the words "always", "constantly," and "in everything" show us that these ideals should be present in the whole of Christian life. A Christ follower is one who should be marked by gratitude, joy, and prayer because it is God's will for us.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Who are you thankful for? Is there anyone you could encourage this week by showing them gratitude?

What role does the Holy Spirit have in helping us maintain hearts of gratitude? What role do other believers play?

What is one way you are going to make gratitude a discipline in your daily life?

PRAYER

As you close in prayer, thank God for His gift to you in Jesus Christ. Pray that God would help us to cultivate hearts of gratitude, especially during the holiday season. Ask God that in whatever situations come our way we may be a people who are consistently marked by gratitude to God.

COMMENTARY

17:11. Jesus apparently walked along the border between Samaria and Galilee, then crossed the Jordan River at the nearest point, proceeding down the eastern bank of the Jordan toward the crossing point opposite Jericho, which is the next location mentioned in the narrative (18:35).

17:12-13. As if he were not unclean enough, Jesus met ten men who suffered from a terrible skin disease (see 5:12). The men knew their condition. Any contact with them made other people unclean (Lev. 13:42-46). Still, they knew Jesus' reputation for healing, so they shouted from a distance. Calling Jesus "Master" (5:5; 8:24, 45; 9:33, 49), they begged for mercy. Mercy, in their case, would mean empathy and pity that would lead to an act of healing.

17:14. Jesus pronounced no great healing formula. He did nothing dramatic. He uttered a simple command: Go let the priests see you. Such a command demanded action from the sick men. To run to the priests meant to show them that they were no longer infected and so could return to normal human contacts. But they had to start to the priests before they were healed. All ten exercised faith in what Jesus said. They started for the priests. When they did, healing came.

17:15-16. As they proceeded to the priests, they were healed. One of the lepers upon observing his healing returned to give thanks to Jesus. It is then pointed out that this leper was a Samaritan. This one had been not only physically healed but spiritually healed as well (17:19). Whereas the other nine received God's word and believed for a time, they fell short of the ultimate healing, i.e., experiencing the divine salvation. They had "been enlightened ... [and] tasted the heavenly gift" (Heb 6:4) in their experience of divine healing, but they fell short of saving faith.

17:17-19. Jesus responded to thanksgiving and praise with a surprising question: Where are the other nine who were healed? Did only this foreigner return to show what God had done and let God get the glory for it? Note that on Jesus' lips foreigner was not a word of scorn and contempt. It was a statement of fact to bring to the attention of the town and especially of the disciples the identity of this man. By identifying the foreigner, He showed the "superiority" of the foreign man of faith to the Jewish men who lacked faith.

Jews saw Samaritans as the enemy (see John 4:9). These people came from the area near the city of Samaria, which King Omri built as the capital of the Northern Kingdom shortly after 900 B.C. The Assyrians destroyed the city in 721 B.C. The territory of Samaria lay between the Aijalon and Jezreel valleys and between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan Valley. After the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, these people tried to maintain an identity as Israelites who worshiped the God of Israel on Mount Gerizim near Shechem. They thought of their name “Samaritan” as coming from a Hebrew word which meant “keepers of the law.” They believed the great mistake in Israelite history was the move of the central sanctuary from Shechem to Shiloh in the time of Eli or before. They believed that King Darius of Persia sent Sanballat back from Babylon to build a Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim.

The Samaritans recognized only the five Books of Moses as sacred. Their text established Mount Gerizim as the worship center with unique readings at Exodus 20:18 and Deuteronomy 27:4. They looked for a Messiah like Moses to come and restore their religion and their land. Jews in the south around Jerusalem had a different view of the Samaritans. They saw them as descendants of foreigners whom the Assyrians brought in to replace the exiled Israelites in 721 B.C. Jerusalem saw Samaritan religion as only an attempt to learn how to worship the historical god of the region to avoid destruction (see 2 Kgs. 17:25-26).

Samaritans opposed Jews as they tried to rebuild the temple and walls of Jerusalem after the Babylonian Exile (Ezra 4:4-24). Papyri found in the Jewish settlement near the town of Elephantine in Egypt show letters from Samaritan priests as well as Jerusalem priests asking for help in building a temple shortly after 500 B.C. The Samaritans may have built a worship place some time after 400 B.C. This was destroyed in 128 B.C.

Samaritans again stirred Jewish ire by supporting Alexander the Great with troops when he invaded Egypt. During the Egyptian campaign, however, the Samaritans revolted, killed their governor, and then faced Alexander’s retaliation. Alexander destroyed the rebuilt city of Samaria, sending the surviving Samaritans fleeing to Shechem. They rebuilt the city in 331, but the Jewish king John Hyrcanus destroyed it in 107 B.C. Immediately before Jesus came during the early Roman period, Pompey forced the Jews to quit persecuting the Samaritans as John Hyrcanus had, and then Herod initiated a huge building program in Samaria. Still, Samaritans did all they could to harass the Jews. They even forced Pontius Pilate from office.

On their first mission venture, Jesus' disciples were protected by not having to go to the Samaritans (Matt. 10:5-6; John 4). But Jesus also made Samaritans heroes of His stories to show the Jews the need for forgiveness, humility, acceptance, and mission (Luke 10:29-37; 17:10-11). He Himself attempted to minister in Samaria, but the Samaritans did not accept Him (Luke 9:52). He did bring a Samaritan woman and her townspeople to belief in Him (John 4). Jewish leaders tried to shame Jesus by accusing Him of being a Samaritan (John 8:48).

About A.D. 70 Emperor Vespasian besieged Mount Gerizim for a month and then slaughtered ten thousand Samaritans. Finally, Emperor Hadrian some time before A.D. 138 constructed a temple for Zeus Hypsisto on Mount Gerizim. Over the centuries Samaritan fortunes have varied. During the fifth century Palestine was home to almost a half million Samaritans. By the sixteenth century the Samaritan community was reduced to a dwindling number around ancient Shechem (or modern Nablus).