

“THANKING-THE-GIVER”

Adapted from Stan Guthrie’s “The Blessing Of Gratitude” in *Christianity Today*.
November 2010, p.p. 47 - 49.

Text: Luke 17.11 - 19 (in pew Bible p. 1037 / in large print Bible p. 1614)

Intro:-illust. movie of Jewish immigrant clan *religiously celebrating Thanksgiving Dinner:*

- don’t enjoy turkey.
- have no idea why they should celebrate with a Thanksgiving Dinner.
- rift caused when turkey carved before one of the three brothers arrives.

-the expression of gratitude:

- act of worshipping God.
- source of great blessing from God.

Take Home Point:

-always thank the Giver of all good things.

- Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow (James 1.17).

COMING TO GOD WITH YOUR NEED (v.v. 11 – 14)

-strong rate of employment ought to make Saskatchewan residents grateful @ this time.

- not so – because economy is precarious.
- resentment & misery is too common.
- damage to self-confidence & emotional well-being is great.
- e.g. growing Occupy Movement driven by discontent.

-ingratitude is an age-old phenomenon.

- Jesus encountered it en route to Jerusalem, near Samaria.
- hailed by 10 lepers who kept at a distance (v.v. 12, 13).
- life threatening disease / stigma & shunning (cf. Leviticus 13.46).
- Jesus was their only hope.

-Jesus instructs them to go to the priests (v. 14 cf. Leviticus 13.53 ff.).

- teachers & public health officers to determine whether a healing had taken place.
- could permit an individual to reenter society.

-test of obedience: if they would not go, they would remain lepers.

- no obedience = no blessing.
- obedience is part & parcel of receiving God’s unmerited grace.

-we can never earn God’s grace but we can short-circuit God’s grace with disobedience.

EXPRESSING YOUR THANKS TO GOD (v.v. 15 – 19)

-Robert Emmons of the University of California – Davis campus, the word thanks & its derivatives appears more than 150 times in the Bible.

-one of the ten, a foreigner / Samaritan, sees that he is cured then he returns to thank Jesus and to give glory to God.

•Jews shunned Samaritans because they followed a corrupt religion.

•however, misery & persecution quickly provide a common ground for the group.

○in animal kingdom during a widespread flood, predator & prey congregate together on higher ground (cited in Wm. Barkley. *The Daily Study Bible Gospel of Luke*. Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1953, p. 226).

○surely our common need of God should draw us together with all men.

-Jesus asks three troubling questions:

•were there not ten cured? / where are the rest of them? / why did only the foreigner come?

•why did Jesus need to be thanked?:

○did Jesus have a childish need for praise & recognition?

○wasn't performing the miracle enough for Him?

○isn't doing a good deed its own reward?

-the other nine lepers had followed orders:

•it would cost time and effort to go back to Jesus, when they wanted to be restored to their home community.

-Jesus had rewarded their obedience but he wanted something more.

•he sought their gratitude.

•Robert Emmons, gratitude = knowing awareness that we have received goodness.

○didn't these nine Jews know?

○e.g. Triumphant Entry on Palm Sunday (Luke 19.39, 40):

▪teacher rebuke your disciples.

▪“I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

-the nine who did not give thanks were both rude and ignorant.

•truth of the universe = giving praise & thanks is not optional but a joyful duty.

•ingratitude is a barrier for receiving God's unmerited grace.

○begin by thanking God for what you already have.

-blessing may come quietly, unexpectedly, or in disguise.

•For everyone who has, Jesus said, “will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him” (Matthew 25.29).

•God's blessings are available to us, if we will but take them with thanksgiving.

Conclusion:

1 Know what God wants.

-always thank the Giver of all good things.

- remember, we can short-circuit God's grace with ingratitude.
- gratitude is a knowing awareness that we are the recipients of goodness.

1 Know how to do what God wants.

-go beyond the shallow cultural expressions of gratitude.

- too often we in North America feel thankful to nobody in particular.
- so many people are thankful in general at Thanksgiving, during times of famine in Africa, throughout brushes with terrorism and war in the Middle East.

-to be thankful in general is very strange – *it is like being married in general*.

- Cornelius Plantinga Jr: Can one be thankful in general, thankful for the blessings and gifts that flow, without acknowledging from where or from whom they might be flowing (in "Assurances of the Heart" *Christianity Today*, Vol. 39, no. 13)?

-stifle complaining from your lips & heart:

- Jill Carattini: if being thankful is by nature being aware and appreciative of things beyond ourselves, *complaining is refusing to see anything by ourselves* (in "Thank Who? *A Slice Of Infinity*. Ravi Zacharias International Ministries © 2001).

- complaining is:

o a refusal to see the One who is among us.

o a choice to overlook the good around us.

- thankfulness is:

o more than a glib note of gratitude or a warm sentiment in general.

o requires something far more personal.

- recognize both the gift before us and the Giver from whom we receive the gift.

DOXOLOGY

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow / Praise Him all creatures here below
Praise Him above ye heavenly host / Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

-be not ungrateful to God:

- don't just pray with desperate intensity in time of need.
- o remember to thank Him for all temporal and spiritual blessings.
- o let us thank him for giving us His only Son.

1 Know that you will do it.

–**Closing Hymn:** #563 Count Your Blessings

A Thanksgiving Prayer

(written by Joe Sherer pastor of the Mount Joy Mennonite Church and shared as the benediction at our community Thanksgiving Eve service):

*May the Lord bless you and keep you,
May He make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.*

*May the broad expanse of God's love and the abundance of His riches in glory,
shape your perspective on your own life and needs,
including those things which disappoint you.*

*May the eyes of your heart be open to all the blessings which surround you;
may this awareness produce a harvest of generosity in your spirit.*

*May thankfulness rise up within you,
not just during this short season, but day after day,
from the early morning watch until you retire for the night.*

*May your prayers reflect gratitude,
while also acknowledging the needs of others
whose situations are so drastically different.*

*May thoughts of Jesus fill your mind,
and hunger for God drive your soul,
and love for Lord guide your speech and your actions.*

*And finally, may the grace, peace, and love of the triune God,
protect, defend, and empower you
to run with perseverance the race marked out for you.*

Amen.