

BaptistWay Bible Series for Feb. 5: Show gratitude for the blessings God gives

January 23, 2006

Posted: 1/23/06

BaptistWay Bible Series for Feb. 5

Show gratitude for the blessings God gives

- Luke 17:11-19

By Ben Johnson

Logsdon Seminary, Abilene

Just a few months ago, we were celebrating Thanksgiving. Many of us probably heard or observed, "We should be thankful every day of the year." Have we been? And if so, how have we shown our gratitude? These are the questions this lesson calls us to consider.

In Luke 17:11-19, we see Jesus leaving Galilee for the last time before his death. On his journey along the border, Jesus went from Galilee to Samaria and then on into Jerusalem. Somewhere between Samaria and Galilee, Jesus stopped in a village where 10 men with leprosy approached him.



[For a printer-friendly version, click on the printer icon at bottom of page.](#)

The Greek word for “leprosy” here is translated as a skin disease. It was not necessarily what we might think of today as leprosy, but very possibly. According to Hebrew tradition, people with leprosy or such skin diseases as these men had were outcasts and required to stay away from everyone. People with such a skin disease were secluded and still are in many cultures in the world. When people with leprosy desired to come near someone, they were required to announce their coming as they approached. This is why we see the 10 men calling upon Jesus from a distance.

Lepers who thought their disease was in remission were to present themselves to a priest. The priest would declare them clean so they could be “proper” citizens again. Jesus sent the 10 lepers to the priest before healing them. Even more amazing is that they all went to the priest still as unclean men, men who had no evidence of healing from their disease. But by faith and trust in Jesus, the men went to the priest anyway. And Jesus cleansed the men on their way to visit the priest.

A few summers ago, I was working at a church in New Mexico. There, I helped lead a Vacation Bible School for a church in a small village. The opportunity arose to lead a weekly church service for a group of young men in a juvenile prison.

I was very nervous about the opportunity. I did not know the teenagers at all, and our group had just a couple of hours to prepare for the worship

service. Through God's leading, the hour we spent singing and talking to the students opened a greater opportunity for me to speak to three specific young men after the session. They all had been struggling with the idea of salvation for awhile. Finally, in that moment, they decided they wanted their lives to change.

God's leading to that place and opportunity resulted in four lives being changed even as I felt unprepared and out of comfort. I sacrificed a normal afternoon of rest that my body told me I needed after travel and a hard week. But I would have sacrificed something so much greater than an afternoon nap had I decided not to follow God's leading. It should not have been a surprise that the young men found salvation that day. The Lord led, and we all knew that something good would come of it. We saw God perform a miracle that only he could do.

However, we often receive gifts and blessings from God with ungrateful hearts. Nine out of the 10 cleansed lepers were ungrateful for the blessing God gave. At least they did not express their gratitude. Only the one, a foreign Samaritan, acknowledged the significance of what God had done.

His being a Samaritan is significant for the same reason it is significant in the story of the Good Samaritan. Samaritans were a people hated by the Jews. Once again, Luke is pointing out that God's grace absolutely is for all people.

For all the lepers, it was not faith in the priest nor faith in themselves. Nor was it faith in anything but Jesus. In the same way, Christians will grow only when we are grateful for the blessings Jesus showers on our lives.

So, how can we be more like the Samaritan in these stories? First, we can turn to Jesus in faith and trust him as our Lord and Savior. There is no other way by which we can be cleansed from our sins. Then, we can and should share that faith with those around us. That may mean forgiving and

sharing the good news even with whom we differ—as the Jews did the Samaritans.

But that is the very nature of the miracle of salvation. Yes, our sins are washed away. However, it also changes us and our perspectives. No longer will we suffer the disease of bigotry and prejudice. Nor are we constrained by our discomfort with or fear of those who are different from us. The differences may still be there, but the discomfort and fear will be gone.

We are, as Paul wrote in Romans 12:2, being transformed by the renewing of our minds. That is a transformation possible only with God. And that is what leads us to lives of gratitude. Let us live lives of thanks to God by letting his grace in us overflow to grace shared with those around us.

Discussion questions

- How do you show gratitude for the grace that God gives you by the way you relate to others?
- How can we show our gratitude to God by extending God's grace to those with whom we differ?



News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.