“Give thanks with a grateful heart”
Luke 17:11-19

A Lifestyle of Thanksgiving

9.30a.m. Sunday 30 July, 2017

Delivered by Senior Pastor Marshall Muller @
the Laidley Baptist Church (Qld).

Introduction
A large dog walks into a butcher shop carrying a purse in its mouth. He puts the purse down and sits in front of the meat case. "What is it, boy?" the butcher jokingly asks. "Want to buy some meat?" "Woof!" barks the dog. "Hmm," says the butcher. "What kind? Liver, bacon, steak ..." "Woof!" interrupts the dog. "And how much steak? Half a pound, one pound ..." "Woof!" The amazed butcher wraps up the meat and finds the money in the dog's purse.

As the dog leaves he decides to follow. The dog enters an apartment house, climbs to the third floor and begins scratching at a door. With that, the door swings open and an angry man starts shouting at the dog. "Stop!" yells the butcher. "He's the most intelligent animal I've ever seen!" "Intelligent?" says the man. "This is the third time this week he's forgotten his key."

He wasn't thankful.

Contrast that to the story of Pam, who worked in downtown Chicago. Every morning, she encountered a heavyset, middle-aged woman in a shabby coat soliciting spare change in front of an old brick church. She greeted everyone with a smile and a pleasant "Good morning." Pam almost always gave her something. After almost a year of this routine, however, the woman in the shabby coat disappeared. Pam wondered what had happened to her.
Then, one beautiful day, she was in front of the church again, still wearing the same, shabby coat. As Pam reached into her purse for the usual donation, the woman stopped her. "Thank you for helping me all those days," she said. "You won't see me again because I've got a job." With that, she reached into a bag and handed Pam a wrapped package. She had been standing at her old spot waiting, not for a handout, but for the people she recognized so that she could give each of them a doughnut.

She was thankful.

A lifestyle of thanksgiving

This year I have had the worst winter for quite some time. I have had the flu/cold etc. several times, and my health has suffered. (You might also have suffered in this way or worse). And what happens when your health is low like that? Well, the whole world is caving in. The sky is falling Chicken Little. Everything seems so hard. You struggle and you feel that you will never overcome this sickness. The future looks bleak.

As a man, I make the worst patient – it's like I'm dying and on my final breath. I cant do anything. I'm too frail to get anything from the fridge and she has to do everything. My wife who is very caring, understands what men are like. She looks after me, but ignores all my whining and whinging. She is very practical and sensible and makes sure that I'm taking the right tablets or food or fluids.

But me when I get sick, the whole world is caving in. The sky is falling Chicken Little.  As I said, everything seems so hard. You struggle and you feel that you will never overcome this sickness. The future looks bleak.

I felt like that ... this past month or two. As a pastor and a follower of Jesus, you can still get a bit desperate, even depressed and lacking in hope, but I kept telling myself that Jesus has overcome this world and that the best is yet to come (amen) and that the Word tells us that we are to give thanks with a grateful heart.

You know we need to be reminded that God is good, ALL the time. And that He has done immeasurably more than we can ever think or imagine for us through His Son Jesus Christ.

We have to remind ourselves that the Scriptures constantly tell us that He loves us – that’s shy He died in our place and set us free with his perfect blood – the one and forever sacrifice that changed everything on that first Easter – YES – we every day have to be reminded that the best is yet to come.

Jesus completed His work as the perfect sacrifice for our sins, and has now become our great High Priest in the Holy Tabernacle in the third heaven. The perfect
sacrifice of perfect blood by the One who is perfect (without sin) in the perfect Temple in the most perfect place there is – in Heaven. But what is Jesus doing right now? He has finished His might work of salvation for all of mankind (John 3:16), He sat down at the right hand of the Father, but now there is one thing that he is still doing. He is still our High Priest for all time, but He is preparing a place for you & me in heaven.

Jesus tells us that He goes to prepare a house (mansion with many rooms) for his followers. Come on – the best is yet to come. Heaven is not a punishment – it is the reward. It is our complete rest. It is more than anyone can describe. It is a place without sorrow or pain or suffering or tears. I wonder what they are going to put on the 6 o’clock news in heaven – cause there ain’t going to be any of that bad stuff to report. Hallelujah!!!

Now you might be going through some heavy stuff right now, and I don’t want to belittle anything of the Journey that God is walking with you right now. But can I say that there are reasons, and mostly it’s because He wants to teach us something – something that we haven’t yet learned. So when we are going through these battles (there might seem like physical battles but mostly they are hidden spiritual battles), God is wanting us to learn something that is important. That’s why I have a different perspective.

If God is good ALL the time, then I want to learn what He has for me in these times, but it’s ALL good. So as a believer you can have a different perspective. Instead of the sky is falling, you can know that the heavens are opening. Why?

Because God is good ALL the time. The battle has been won on the cross. Jesus is victorious and we are on our way to heaven – maybe today should God the Father give the nod for the Son to return for His Bride. That’s you & me if you are a believer and a true follower of Jesus today.

We are to give thanks with a grateful heart (so the song says). Why? Well if you don’t have a grateful heart, then you aren’t really giving thanks are you? You might think you are, but you’re not really.

What happened as a teenager when I gave my life to Jesus, and said God I believe by faith only through grace that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He died, was buried and was raised on the 3rd day, is that the Holy Spirit went BOOM – and I was changed. My DNA was no longer just human DNA, now I had become infused by the Holy Spirit and I had become a new creation – 2 Corinthians 5:17 –

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” The word “therefore” in this passage refers us back to verses 14-16 where Paul tells us that all believers have died with Christ and no longer live for themselves. Our lives are no longer worldly; they are now spiritual. Our “death” is
that of the old sin nature which was nailed to the cross with Christ. It was buried with Him, and just as He was raised up by the Father, so are we raised up to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). That new person that was raised up is what Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians 5:17 as the “new creation.” The old has passed away and the new has come.

That is why we give thanks with a different heart, a heart that is grateful, because you and I can’t help it!! Our Father has set eternity in our hearts, He is making all thing new again, the best is yet to come.

Today I want to talk about being thankful to God ALL the time no matter the circumstances, and to do it with a grateful heart. Not because of anything we can do or have done, but ONLY because of what Jesus has accomplished. We are the recipients of eternity, sin forgiven, accepted as sons and daughters in heaven, joint heirs with the Son – what more do we want? That’s it!! And it’s been given to us – ALL of it has been given to us, provided by the Father for you & me … if we want it!!

How’s your heart today? Is it grateful? Is it thankful? Is it grateful for the things that He is doing and has done in your life?

Let’s pray first & then we’ll get into the Word. **Let’s pray.**

Gracious God & our wonderfully present Heavenly Father, it is with grateful hearts that we gather in the name of Jesus today. We come out of this world, leaving behind the things of this world, only to bring you glory and praise and to lift the name of Jesus into the realms of heaven today. Our hearts and the joy that you have won the victory is overflowing in us, that you have set everything in place for us – for that which is yet to come. We gather today in thankfulness around the common banner of Jesus – the empty cross & the empty tomb & the fulfilled Word of God. We look forward to all things you have for us – because of your goodness and wisdom in our lives. Blessed be your holy name. Thank you today that as your people we can live as new creatures, born again in and through the blood of Jesus, for eternity. Holy Spirit reveal these things afresh to us today, as we sit at the foot of the cross, and as we learn what the Master is saying to us. In the blessed name of Jesus. Amen

*Did you know that we are blessed? No, no – I mean really blessed!*
If you live in Australia, we are blessed. We are a blessed nation. We have things that no other country has. Our welfare system here is the best that money can buy – Oh yeah! Someone has to pay for it. Taxpayers are paying for it, more each year, but it’s the best in the world. That’s why people want to live in Australia. We are rich and not poor! God has blessed us. It’s obvious! But with this blessing, can you believe that we are trying to stop others coming here from overseas. Can you believe that we have reduced our foreign aid to those countries who really need some of our abundance right now?

Well I don’t know if you’ve thought about it much, but it’s true. We are a rich nation, we are blessed. Many today might have lived elsewhere, and have come here from another country because there is a better opportunity for them for jobs, or a better opportunity for their family & kids as they grow up – their education, their health, their general future. We’ve all come here under that understanding. My family moved here over 110 years ago – came in a boat from Europe where they were being persecuted as Christians – and built a living out of the scrub, starting from scratch – they had nothing but their gifts & talents and their faith and hope in God.

I want you to think about it. I found some research from the ABS in their 2009-10 Census about how much is spent by the average household each year. There are 9 millions homes in Australia.

- On average, Australian households spend around $109 a year on fresh fish and seafood.
- On average, Australian households spend around $20 a year on Christmas decorations.
- On average, Australian households spends around $8.34 a year on sunscreen.
- On average, Australian households spend around $29 a year on fishing equipment.
- On average, Australian households spend around $11 a year on bottled gas for BBQs.
- On average, Australian households spend around $136 a year on ice confectionary, like ice cream! (That’s $1.224 billion)
- On average, Australian households spend around $656 a year on beer.
- On average, Australian households spend around $62 a year on outdoor and garden furniture.
- On average, Australian households spend around $36 a year on camping equipment.

Let’s take it a bit further, to the USA. Here’s what they spend each year based on some 2016 research.

206 billion dollars on fast food each year – enough to fund all of the cardiovascular and obesity-related research for the next 67 years.

- Confectionery - In 2016, consumer spending on ice cream and other frozen desserts was estimated to be $13.5 billion – more than 8 times the total funding for nutrition research in the U.S.

- MOVIES - In 2016, the U.S. domestic box office earned a record $11.37 billion, enough to fund the research for eye disease and vision disorders for 13.5 years.

- PIZZA - In 2016, Americans spent an estimated $45 billion on pizza, enough to fund the research on digestive diseases for over 25.5 years.

- TOBACCO - In 2016, US tobacco companies grossed $117 billion in revenue – enough to fund NIH-sponsored research on lung cancer for more than 353 years.

- HOME ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS - Americans spent $18.3 billion on home entertainment in 2016, an amount that could fund the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communications Disorders for 44 years.

- COFFEE - The U.S. spent 5.18 billion on coffee in 2016, which could fund all research on sleep for 16.5 years.

- ALCOHOL - The $219.5 billion Americans spent on alcoholic beverages in 2016 could fund all research on alcoholism, alcohol use and health, and liver diseases for the next 196 years.

- The US video, mobile, and digital game industry generated $23.98 billion in 2016, enough to fund all of the sponsored research on depression, suicide, and youth violence for more than 45.6 years.

(Source - [http://www.researchamerica.org/advocacy-action/research/research-takes-cents](http://www.researchamerica.org/advocacy-action/research/research-takes-cents))

Are you getting this? The figures are obscene – but you get the picture that countries like Australia and the USA – that we are blessed. But are we thankful?

It is estimated that if you own a car in Australia (even if it’s on blocks and has no tyres and no engine) that you are in the top 5% of people in the world.
It is also estimated that if you have more than $2 in your wallet or purse or bag today, that You are in the top 4% of people in the world.

If you have a car AND $2 on you (together), then you are in the top 2% of the world population. That is crazy, but it’s true. It gets you thinking about how blessed we are today?

**Are you thankful?**

Today are you thankful for what you have?

And do you know what? We can’t take any of it with us. I officiate at dozens of funerals each year – and not one of them do they put any of them money or their trophies or furniture or cars in the grave with them. That stuff gets left behind for the family to squabble over. Sad, but true.

The only thing that you take with you when you die – and this is what we need to be thankful for today – is JESUS!!

Are you thankful for JESUS today? As the Church, the Bride of Christ, are you thankful that the groom is coming back for you? Are you thankful that what He promises, He will do?

Today are we thankful that He has pulled you out of death (we were dead men walking) and into newness of life. We can’t do this. Are we thankful? Oh yes!!

I can tell after talking to any person here today whether you are thankful for Jesus or not. Do you know how? In a few minutes I can generally determine what is important to you. How can I do this? Because out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.

Jesus said this (Luke 6:45)- *A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.*

In a short period of time, I can tell what you spend your time on, what you spend your money on, and what/who you talk about. Those 3 things will tell me what is important to you. It will also tell me if you are thankful for Jesus (with a grateful heart).
So, today it is so important to get your heart right – to be grateful to God. To have the right motives in all that we do.

Sometimes, I hear that people describe themselves that they aren’t team players – you know it’s just how God made me. Nope – God created you to live in community, as the kingdom-minded Body of Christ. Our motive is that we are to serve the Body of Christ – to build one another up - we can only do this with grateful hearts for God and for one another.

Hebrews 13:15 – it says that even our words are to be a continual sacrifice offering of praise to God. Every word you choose to speak on your lips can bring praise & glory to God, or not. We are instructed to bring every word as a sacrifice. The fruit of lips that confess His name.

I want to read a quick account from Luke 17:11-19 – it’s where Jesus heals 10 lepers with no future but misery and early death. They had no hope. I want you to imagine that you are a leper today. You live as an outcast, out of town in the bush, in caves, you have disease that gets worse each day, you smell, there is no cure. You have to warn people when they come close to move away because of your condition. You are the bottom-dwellers in society. In Jesus’ day there was no cure, no welfare system, no hope.

Let’s read the account … then we’re going to talk about the one who gets a special mention – the one with a grateful heart. He’s the only one printed in the Bible. I want to meet this guy in heaven. I think we can all learn great things from him today.

READ LUKE 17:11-19

Teen Street a few weeks ago – before one of the sessions we had a ‘L’ or a ‘P’ written onto our wrist before going in. We had been looking at Jesus as unequalled, and we had been learning from Mark 2-3.

Whether you had an L (leper) or a P (Paralysed man) you had to move to one end of the building. It was interesting to watch 600 people in the hall act like either a leper or a paralysed person (dragging themselves along the ground), all yelling things out. But all needing help. They weren’t able to help themselves. Only Jesus (as the unequalled healer) brings hope & healing.

Note-worthy from the Passage (what did you pick up from the reading?)
• Leprosy was thought to be contagious (like sin). But it is curable & treatment in the early stages can prevent disfigurement.

• Grace not Rules – plaque on the Temple in Jerusalem forbidding non-Jews from going any further (written in several languages).

• Shouting our gratitude to Jesus

• Leviticus 14 – priests had to determine if healing was complete (and no longer unclean).

• Jesus sends all 10 lepers to the priest BEFORE they were healed. They responded in FAITH (no other hope but to listen to the Master). Cleansed as we go (just like the forgiveness of our daily sin)

• This leper was a Samaritan despised by the Jews (half breeds), and yet Jesus responds to his needs. God’s grace is for everyone.

• Are we like the lepers today – do we respond in faith & put our complete trust in God before we see any evidence? That day the leper received salvation – Your faith has saved you!

• Sometimes we tend to think that others will thank Jesus in our Church. Maybe one of the others will let Jesus know. But when God answers our prayers we need to be sure to stop/make time & thank God.

I want us to learn 4 things today that are important going forward if we are to be a grateful Church, with a grateful spirit.

1. Be thankful even if you are in difficult circumstances.

This kind of thankfulness is faith. We read the story too quickly, I think. Slow it down, and picture it with me.

We start with ten men who have the worst disease of their day. The physical ramifications are horrendous. Leprosy attacks the body, leaving sores, missing fingers, missing toes, damaged limbs. In many cases, the initial pain of leprosy gives way to something more terrible than that - a loss of sensation in nerve endings, leading to more damage to more body parts. The disease can take 30 years to run its course, and in that time span, entire limbs can simply fall off. It is, assuredly, a most horrible disease. We have nearly an impossible task in trying to fathom what it was like 2,000 years ago, when medical treatment as we know it today was almost non-existent.

Beth Moore, in her book Jesus The One And Only, tells of an occasion she had to be near a modern-day leper colony. Something within her had always wanted to
minister in a leper colony, but her trip overseas had given her the first opportunity to be near such a place. She walked by the entrance three times. She saw those who were suffering. She begged herself for a chance to go inside. But she could not.

The reason? The smell overwhelmed her. She could not work up the stomach to go inside the colony. She could not bear the thought of witnessing for the Lord, but at the same time becoming violently ill as she faced human beings already acutely aware that they were different. The trip passed, and she was not able to go inside.

And, I think, we gained a new appreciation of how bad this disease must have been in the days of Christ. It wasn't just the grotesque damage, or the attack to our sight. It wasn't just the loud cries, the attack to our hearing. It was also the smell of rotting, decaying flesh, overwhelming even our sense of smell.

The emotional pain of a leper, however, must have been even worse than the physical pain. He was removed from his family, from his community. There could be no contact, whatsoever, with his children or grandchildren. None. Immediately removed. His wife would not be allowed to kiss him goodbye. He would not have allowed it, for fear that she, too, would become afflicted.

Lepers tended to roam together, looking for food, begging for assistance from a great distance, learning to yell in loud voices, both from the need to warn others, and to beg for help from across the way.

What would it have been like to have been removed from friends and family for a lifetime, and to have been forced to announce that removal on a daily basis? It must have been horrible.

And yet, in this account, ten men encounter Jesus, and hear him say the most unusual thing. "We want to be well!" they scream at Jesus. And the great teacher responds, "Go and show yourselves to the priest."

The local priest had duties other than leading worship on each Sabbath. He was also something of a health official. If a person was miraculously healed of leprosy, it was up to the priest to inspect the body, to test for a complete removal of the disease, and to announce the person healed. In such cases, the person would have been cleansed, and at that point, it would be fine for the leper to see his wife again, to hold his daughter again, to look for work again. If the priest gave him the OK, he would be healed!

Now, Jesus says to these lepers, "Go and show yourselves to the priests."

They look down at their bodies. The hands of one man are still mangled. Another man looks at his leg, which ends with a filthy rag at the knee. Another looks at his skin, and finds it as repulsive as ever.

In other words, all of these men were no better off than they had been ten minutes earlier, when they had first spotted the famous teacher.
And yet, they headed off in search of the priests. And on their way, they were healed. On their way, a hand reappeared, and tingled with life. A crutch tripped on a filthy rag, as it fell to the ground. The leg was back, healthy, whole, complete. The skin cleared, and the tiny hairs on a forearm turned from snow white to brown. One looked at the other, another looked at the rest, and the screaming started. The smiles broke into cheering, and a sweet madness. They raced off in the distance, not believing that the nightmare was finally over.

But in order for the miracle to happen, these men had to start walking in faith before their circumstances had changed one tiny bit.

Is there a more potent lesson for us, on this Thanksgiving week? You cannot wait until the problems are over to start walking in faith. You cannot put conditions on holy God. You cannot say, "Lord, as soon as there’s enough money, I follow your instructions." You cannot pray, "Lord, if you'll just solve this issue in my family, I'll start to church." You cannot put conditions on God! Instead, God places a demand for faith on us, before anything at all has changed.

God might say, "Love me despite the disease. Obey me despite the lack of talent, or the lack of resources. Follow me now, despite the depression. Say no to the temptation, while it still is difficult. Praise me in the darkest of nights, and in the worst of circumstances."

This is the nature of God, a God who loves you so much, He'll give you the opportunity to be thankful when nothing about your circumstances gives you that motivation. My friends, that is the very definition of faith. If you praised God only on the good days, only in the best of circumstances, it would not be faith at all. That would be more like a business arrangement - and this is not about business!

Some of you are in horrible circumstances, right now. And what awaits you today, this week, is a forcing of the question. Will you be thankful despite the difficult circumstances? If so, you will have experienced faith.

While on a short-term missions trip in 1996, Pastor Jack Hinton from New Bern, North Carolina, was leading worship at a leper colony on the island if Tabango. There was time for one more song, so he asked if anyone had a request. A woman who had been facing away from the pulpit turned around.

"It was the most hideous face I had ever seen," Hinton said. "The woman's nose and ears were entirely gone. The disease had destroyed her lips as well. She lifted a fingerless hand in the air and asked, 'Can we sing Count Your Many Blessings?'"

Overcome with emotion, Hinton left the service. He was followed by a team member who said, "Jack, I guess you'll never be able to sing that song again."

"Yes I will," Jack replied, "but I'll never sing it the same way."
2. Be thankful in the work of God's goodness

This kind of thankfulness is worship.

One of the men came back to Jesus, and praised God. He was thankful. He was public about it. He was loud - he wasn't shy at all.

Why was he so loud? This guy had been forced to yell for as long as he'd had leprosy. Had it been years? He'd probably yelled so long, he didn't know how to come to the Lord quietly, or even in a normal voice. When he came back and fell at the feet of Jesus, he was just louder than the normal person, and he was praising God.

This is an amazingly short application point. This week, be sure you take time to acknowledge God for his goodness. Be sure to actually be thankful. Be sure to gather everyone up for a prayer of Thanksgiving that's a real prayer of thankfulness. Don't miss the opportunity to worship God this week. And be loud about it!

Can you miss it? Sure you can. It's a short week for most folks, which means you might be horribly busy for one, two, or three days. You might have some time off, which means you've got some honey-do chores at home, some tasks at church, or some Christmas shopping to do at all the big sales. If you're traveling, you've got to get going. If you're hosting the family, you've got to cook. You've got to get to the grocery store. You've got to call the turkey help-line again and remember how to get it done.

In a holiday week, it's possible to get all the way through Thanksgiving without ever stopping to be thankful! Don't do that! Commit to it, and do it. That is worship.

3. Make sure your thankfulness leads to action

One healed leper came back. One caught himself in the midst of the celebration, and returned to Jesus. He reversed his steps, put his family on hold, put the priest on hold, and came back to the cause of his celebration. His response and life situation were unique, but in the simplest sense of what he did his thankfulness led to action. And boy, did that turn out to be important!

"Where are the other nine?" Jesus asked.

Do you realize what this says? Jesus said, "Go, and show yourselves to the priests. Jesus never commanded that any of them express thankfulness to God, or return to him, the healer. Nevertheless, that is what Jesus expected.

What kind of action is Jesus looking for from you? Has God's Holy Spirit been urging you toward some action step? Had the Lord been tugging at you for some step of faith? Is there a family, a friend, or even a stranger in need of help this Thanksgiving season? Is there something you feel compelled to do?
My best advice, based on what Jesus was looking for 2,000 years ago, is to take that step of action. Assume God is pulling you toward that area, or that action, and get it done. Otherwise, a prayer over the Thanksgiving meal will last about as long as that sensation of fullness after the meal. I don't know about you, but no matter how full I get on Thanksgiving Thursday, I always manage to eat well on Friday.

Shouldn't our spirit of thankfulness last longer than that? Get it done!

4. A lifestyle of thankfulness is a lifestyle of wellness

Look at the Scripture again, and walk with me through this. We're going to look at three different words that are all trying to say the same thing. They're all saying that this leper-used-to-be is well.

Look first at verse 15. "One of them, when he saw he was healed . . ." and stop there. This Greek word is "hi-a-tha," which is a purely medical term. It means to mend, to repair. It's like a broken bone finally mending. This guy was all patched up.

Look at verse 17. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Stop there. This is a different word than hi-a-tha. This is "kath-a-ri-dzo," the root word for our "catheter." It, too, is a medical word in part, for it means, "remove the impurities." When a doctor inserts a heart "cath," angioplasty might remove a blockage of an artery. It will cause healing. Naturally, the Jewish connotations of this word are important, too. To be "cleansed" was exactly what the priest would be looking for, and would declare. It carried some religious overtones, too.

And now, look at one more word. In verse 19, Jesus says to this very thankful man, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

"Made you well . . ." that's a different word. It's not a medical word, necessarily, although it was used to describe the safe delivery of a baby. This is the word, "so-so," which means, "saved." The Greeks used it for people who escaped dangerous situations. Sailors surviving a storm at sea had been saved, they said. "So-dzo."

When Matthew began his gospel, he started with the Christmas story. The angel told Joseph to name the Christ child "Jesus," because that name meant that he would "save people from their sins." He would "so-dzo" the people.

When Paul described what would happen to a person who publicly professed Jesus as Lord and savior, he used this same word.

". . . If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (so-dzo). For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved (so-dzo!) (Romans 10:9-10).

And Jesus says to this very thankful man willing to follow God before his circumstances changed - to worship God before he returned home - Jesus
pronounces a complete healing, a wellness that passes all other wellness terms. This man, Jesus said, understands. Do you understand?

**Conclusion**

I want to understand more and more about our wonderful Savior.

Remember that a priest must make a declaration that a leper had been healed? There were great details involved in this process. There were details of what a priest was to look for, and how a person with the disease could be readmitted to the community, healed, and whole.

But did you know that in our record of the Old Testament, and the New Testament, that every single healing of a leper came by supernatural means? Now think about this: There were great details about what would happen if a leper became naturally well, but it never happened as far as we know. Perhaps people suspected of leprosy were pronounced clean when their skin rash cleared up. Perhaps someone with a mild infection ran the course of the sickness, and was readmitted. But according to the records of the Bible, no real leper was ever just naturally cured. This was a lifetime sentence of pain and exclusion.

But there were some healings. The sister of Moses had leprosy for a week, and was miraculously cured. A man named Naaman was cured miraculously. And that’s it, in the OT. In the NT, however, Jesus heals lepers as if they had mild colds, and he had the right medicine. Jesus continued the practice of healing lepers not naturally, but supernaturally.

It was another way of God saying to us: This is the Messiah. This is the Christ. This is Immanuel. God is with you, for only God has healed lepers. Only God.

And Jesus was healing lepers as if he had the very power. He did. He was the Son of God, God incarnate, and God worthy of worship.

Can I give you another reason to love this Jesus? Can I show you another proof that he loves you, no matter who you are, where you've been, or what you've done?

It's a story Matthew recorded. (Read Matt. 8:1-4)

A leper approaches Jesus, stopping at the required distance. He knelt before Jesus, begging for help. The very sight of him was repulsive. The smell of him was revolting. People gasped, and backed away. Some surely commanded him to clear the roadway, to not put anyone at risk. "Get out, get out, get out!"

Matthew writes that Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.

A moment later, he tells us that Jesus spoke the words: "Be clean . . . go show yourself to the priest."
Did you see both miracles? The leprosy was gone. That’s the easy miracle to see. But the other one? It was the touch of a loving hand. It was the touch of a human hand.

Today, you’ve touched more people in an hour than this man had touched in years. Today, you’ve been close to friends, or family. Maybe a child has been in your lap. Maybe a hug met you at a door. Maybe it was a firm handshake from a firmer friend.

Not this guy. He longed for a loving touch more than he longed for food. More than he needed water, he needed love. And before he was healed, while there was still a tremendous risk, Jesus was willing to give him that touch.

No abuse has scarred you so badly that Jesus won't touch you. Jesus is willing to lovingly touch you, hold you, and restore you.

No sin has made you unlovable. Jesus is willing to call you his friend, and stand beside you. It was his death that paid for your sin.

No fear has disqualified you. No problem has put your life on hold. No failure has negated his love. The miracle of Thanksgiving is the love of Jesus, for you. No exceptions, no qualifications, no doubts. He loves you.

**And for that, O God, we are so thankful.**

Do you have a thankful spirit? Does your Church and it's leaders have a thankful spirit? 9 out of the ten lepers here had an ungrateful spirit. Those nine don’t get mentioned. The one that we need to pay attention to in this account in the one who had the thankful heart. He was saved!

Only the grateful/thankful man realised the power of faith in his healing. That’s what I mean about our trials/sufferings – there are things that Jesus wants us to learn. What do you think that healed leper learned about faith that day? In that one moment? It’s a weird thing to say, but are you thanking God for the trials? You know he won’t give you more than you can handle. He always provides an escape.

Only Christians with a grateful spirit will fully understand God’s grace. God doesn’t expect us to come and say thank you, but let me tell you He is extremely pleased when we do.

**Story** – last night my daughter rang me from Sydney to chat. *There is no greater moment in a Father’s life when their daughter rings and tells them that they are so grateful for what we taught them and how we raised them in the Lord).*
As a child of God, it’s the times of learning when we realise the power of God, that we humble ourselves and learn more of God and his nature and purpose for us.

Maybe at the end of the message allow people to stand & pray and thank God with a grateful heart for the things that He has done in their life.

**Let’s Pray**

Gracious God & our Heavenly Father,

We come with grateful hearts in the redeeming name of Jesus. Thank you for Spirit that moves among us and in us. We thank you for saving us from sin and death and giving us life eternal through Jesus. Continue to strengthen our faith and to learn to trust you in all circumstances. But most of all help us to have hearts that are thankful for all that you do, because you are a good God.

*Amen.*

**Closing Song ~ Oh Praise the Name (of the Lord our God).**

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance 13 and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

14 When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed.

15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

17 Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” 19 Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

---

Luke 17:11-19  The Message (MSG)

11-13 It happened that as he made his way toward Jerusalem, he crossed over the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten men, all lepers, met him. They kept their distance but raised their voices, calling out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

14-16 Taking a good look at them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” They went, and while still on their way, became clean. One of them, when he realized that he was healed, turned around and came back, shouting his gratitude, glorifying God. He kneeled at Jesus’ feet, so grateful. He couldn’t thank him enough—and he was a Samaritan.

17-19 Jesus said, “Were not ten healed? Where are the nine? Can none be found to come back and give glory to God except this outsider?” Then he said to him, “Get up. On your way. Your faith has healed and saved you.”

---