

## **Pastor Mollie's Sermon**

**October 13, 2019**

### **Luke 17:11-19- Healing the 10 lepers- living out gratitude**

One of the things my parents instilled in me , and hope to pass on to my boys, is writing thank you notes.

Admittedly, I was not always enthusiastic about this task.

Most of the time my mom would need to offer a template of sorts for me to copy when I was younger,

and there may have been a few bribes involved here and there along the way.

Now I love sending notes in the mail...

Whether they be thank you notes, im sorry cards, or just because cards.

And if thank you notes are not your thing, you know you either have said to your kiddos, or heard a parent say to their kiddos once they have received anything for someone...

“What do you say???” Kind of in that stern voice implying “we have gone over this....”

Hoping they pick the proper polite word of “Thank you”

I thought about parental commitment as I was reflecting on the Gospel lesson for today, not to lift me up for the “Excellence in Parenting” award,

But it made me realize how true it is that gratitude is a way of life.

That gratitude, gets established by patterns and practices that shape a way of being in the world.

In other words, there is more to being grateful than saying, “thank you.”

All too often this story of Jesus healing the 10 lepers gets reduced as illustrative of what gratefulness should look like

And, then, the story devolves into moral commands: have an attitude of gratitude; write more thank-you notes.

Amen....

But there is an important pattern in this story,

a certain demonstration of the practice of gratitude, that reiterates how gratitude is a way of being.

The one leper who came back, a Samaritan, embodies gratitude.

His pattern, his practices, lend themselves to a ritual, if you will –

that then gets lodged into the habits of life and becomes a part of who you are, especially, who we are as people of faith.

The pattern of gratitude looks something like: awareness, action, praise, gratitude, on your way.

So, then, I got to thinking....

How are the church's acts of gratitude viewed differently from the “Thank You” cards section in the Hallmark store?

How can we in the church talk about gratitude with a biblical basis?

This one Samaritan leper helps us consider what theological gratitude can look like.

Because this one Samaritan leper embodies gratitude with God in mind.

Gratitude starts with awareness and attentiveness.

The Samaritan leper sees that he has been healed and acknowledges that healing.

Once healed, it is often far too easy to move on; to offer that automatic “thanks,” isn't it?

But this story in Luke tells us that seeing is more than sight – it is seeing through God's eyes, through the lens of Jesus.

It is to see that you are whom God has seen, whom God has regarded.

With this sight, turning back is the action for response.

When you have been seen by God, you cannot go on, but have to return to God so as to imagine how you are now an important part of God's kingdom.

You turn back to give praise to God because seeing what God has done results in responding with worship and praise.

So then...praise comes before gratitude.

What difference does this make?

It affirms the object of our gratitude.

It confirms that to whom we express our gratitude is God; that we recognize who God is..

It makes sense, doesn't it?

Before we can say, "God, thank you for...", we praise God for God being God.

What comes after "for" is so vast, so extraordinary, so amazing – where do we even begin?

There are specifics along the way, those very particular things for which we are thankful, but this story reminds us that we can get lost in the many "fors" and forget to praise God first; that praise is different than gratitude,

of which the Psalm prompts,

"Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart. Great are the works of the Lord.. The works of his hands are faithful and just."

After the praise, the recognition that God's name is holy, comes the gratitude.

Only then does the thankfulness make sense.

Only then is the gratitude situated within the larger reality of God's grace and mercy.

And finally, after the gratitude?

We are called to go on our way.

We are called to go out and give witness to our God, our God whose work is big, amazing, and incredible!!!

The expression of gratitude cannot be the final word because the world needs to hear about the one on whom we rely, the one whose love endures forever.

As I have said before, we are here to be God's people, Sent out to share God's love with everyone.

I had a parishioner at my previous church, that would always respond to my casual question, "How are you?" with

"I'm Grateful!"

It took me by surprise!

Not just the first or second time, but almost every time.

Eventually, of course, I wasn't so much surprised, as I was struck by the simplicity and power of this statement.

It wasn't the answer I expected.

Indeed, we usually expect little more than "fine" or "pretty good" or maybe once and a while "great" when we ask this conversational placeholder, "How are you?"

"I'm grateful." My parishioner chose his words with care. He wanted to make a point.

Gratitude is not only a response to good fortune but also a way of being.

Try it sometime when someone asks you the old familiar question: "how are you?"

You may surprise yourself or those around you, when you use this simple yet powerful 2 word statement.

Amen.