

# THANKSGIVING SUNDAY

## Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church

---

### Where Thankfulness Comes From

#### Luke 17:11-19

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

<sup>14</sup> When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

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

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

The typical Thanksgiving sermon goes something like this: You should be thankful. You are not thankful – or, not thankful enough. So, be thankful! Amen.

But that doesn't work on a number of levels. First, there's no Gospel in it, only appeals to the law and your guilt. Second, we already know we're supposed to be thankful. The issue is why we're not on most every other day but Thanksgiving? We should know better. We do know better. But still, like little kids, we struggle at being thankful 364 days of the year.

Instead of looking for the answer in what's wrong with us, let's look at what happens on Thanksgiving Day that makes it special and unique and sets it apart from all other days. Isn't it that this is the day when people go home to be with family? And while the pandemic is scaling that back somewhat, Thanksgiving is still a day to turn away from our inward focus and towards others, whether they are across the table or across the country or down at the rescue mission. On Thanksgiving we make the effort to connect with them. To share ourselves with them and give of ourselves and what we have to them either literally or digitally. We do so on a day when time isn't the enemy or something we're up against but what we share together in ways that say and show we appreciate each other.

Isn't that why thankfulness is so easy to find on Thanksgiving Day? We're grateful to connect! It just feels right. Even like things should always be like that.

But most days aren't. Most days, especially now days, we're not connected but isolated. We're busy individuals, focused on getting what we need and getting by. Most days our friends are virtual, names on a list of contacts we text instead of talk to ... check their posts instead of hang out with .... Do you think this disconnectedness might have something to do with why it is so hard to be thankful on days that aren't Thanksgiving?!

But not only do we live most of those days squeezing each other out of them, we do it to God too. For instance, our knowledge of the world and how it works means that God is not looked to so much anymore for what we need. In our minds the rain doesn't come from God but from that low-pressure system making its way across the country. The harvest comes from hybrid seeds, GPS guided plowing and reaping of ultra-efficient agriculture and fine-tuned food processing plants and zero-inventory distribution systems. Sure, God's the one, we confess, ultimately responsible for such things, but such a confession implies he's distant. As in so very far away from my thoughts most days, and thus from my life, and from my reality as I live it that giving thanks doesn't feel needed or necessary or is even considered on most days.

But then something goes wrong. The rains become floods. The harvest fails. Supply chains get interrupted. People get sick. People die. But then what happens? Communities come together to help those effected by natural disaster. We give to the needy. We reach out to our sick and suffering and grieving sisters and brothers with our love and prayers and support. And thanksgiving blossoms again, right in the middle of struggle and hurt, sickness and death. Such things force us out of our usual independent lives and put us back together again. They focus us not on ourselves but others. To share ourselves with them and give of ourselves to them. We make an effort for others. And it feels right. Like the way things should always be. Because it is.

Perhaps you've noticed how people who have lost everything are often so thankful. It's not because of their loss but because of the unexpected kindness and care of others. Same for those suffering sickness and grieving loved ones. They are moved by how others reach out to them, pray for them, care for them. And so, in the midst of even things gone horribly wrong, there is something right. That is the very hand of God at work for us, providing for and protecting us. The hand that was always there before, but we couldn't see it because of our usual isolation and our sinful preoccupation with our stuff and our success and ourself. But when what's blinding us is taken away, we can see. And we are thankful.

That's what happens on Thanksgiving Days to an extent. What we're usually focused on ... what blinds us ... is set aside and we can see again. See each other. Not just as a name on a list or a friend with a like, but as gifts from God himself. And we are thankful.

And so, it was that day on the road that marked the border between Samaria and Galilee. A traveler came to take away the isolation of ten lepers. He was God in the flesh, come to be with his people. Not a God far away, but Immanuel. To share himself and give of himself. To give healing and life to ten men in their dreadful struggle against a disease that was steadily and painfully killing them. And a Samaritan, an outsider to the nine Jewish lepers and an outcast of the greater community because of his leprosy, got not only the gift of healing, but also a place in Jesus' family of faith.

And so, he gave thanks ... to his Savior, God in the flesh, who kept traveling the road until he came to Jerusalem where he gave himself to death on a cross. His life for the life of the world. For the forgiveness of sins. That others could be in the family of faith with that Samaritan, where God is not far away (he never is) but ever near. Immanuel. God with us.

Like he is right now. Here in his Word, in the flesh and blood of his Sacrament. Our God preached into our ears and placed into our hands and poured into our mouths, forgiveness put into our very souls for help and healing, life and salvation. Gifts he gives us sinners, but even more a place in his family of faith. And thankfulness blossoms again because of it.

Thankfulness that we then share with others. Not because it is a rule or something you *should* do more of, but because that's what thankfulness does. It is not kept to oneself, it shared. It is expressed. As the Samaritan leper did in his praise of and thanks to Jesus - and while it isn't explicitly mentioned in the text, we get the impression to everyone else he would ever meet. That's how thankfulness is. It is joy that is shared. It is giving what we have received. It is living in the image of God by focusing on others, not ourselves. And we know, this is right. It feels like the way things should always be: right with God because of our Immanuel Jesus, so we can be right with each other in love.

That's where thankfulness comes from today and Thursday and always.

Amen.

### **Prayer of the Day**

- M: O Holy Spirit, you move the hearts of your people to praise and thanksgiving. Since we are come together to offer our worship and gratitude for God's endless gifts to us, we ask your presence now among us; together with the Son who died and rose again to save us, and the heavenly Father, who created and still preserves us, one Lord, our God, world without end.
- C: **Amen.**

### **Prayers of the Church**

- M: Lord God we thank you for many things. For the roofs that shelter us and the food that sustains us. For the people we enjoy these blessings with, especially during the Thanksgiving Holiday.
- C: **Thank you for all those who reflect the love of Christ in our lives.**
- M: Thank you for this land and all it produces. For our farms and factories. For a society where the rule of law is respected and the public good upheld.
- C: **Thank you for our nation, our state and this community. Bless those who hold offices of high trust, so that we would continue to enjoy your blessings of peace, security and well-being.**
- M: You give so much without our asking.
- C: **We pray that you would lead us to realize this and to receive your blessings with thanksgiving.**
- M: Hear us, Lord, as we give thanks for personal blessings.  
*Silent Prayer*  
*Intercessions*
- M: In your mercy, O Lord, hear the prayers of all who call on you through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
- C: **Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Closing Prayer**

- M: Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for nourishing us in this Sacrament with your body and blood. You have given us forgiveness, life and salvation. Send us out now in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.
- C: **Amen.**

### **Deuteronomy 8:10-18**

<sup>10</sup> When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. <sup>11</sup> Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. <sup>12</sup> Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, <sup>13</sup> and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, <sup>14</sup> then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. <sup>15</sup> He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. <sup>16</sup> He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you. <sup>17</sup> You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” <sup>18</sup> But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

+

### **Luke 17:11-19**

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

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

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

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

+