

## GRATITUDE FOR GRACE

(Luke 17:11-19)

- Intro: Woman died and went to heaven.
- As she was being given a tour of heaven.
    - #She walked down a brightly-lit hallway.
  - On one side of the hallway was a busy work station.
    - #Hundreds of angels flying around in perpetual motion.
      - \*"What's going on here?"
        - +Woman asked.
        - \*"This is where prayer requests are received."
          - +Her guide told her.
            - = "It's open 24 and 7.
            - = "All prayer requests come here."
              - "Petitions people raise on their own behalf."
              - "Petitions raised on behalf of others."
    - #It was an impressive sight.
    - On the other side of the hallway was an equally busy work station.
      - #Hundreds of angels flying around in perpetual motion.
        - \*"What's going on here?"
          - +Woman wanted to know.
          - \*"This is where prayer requests are answered."
            - +She was told.
              - = "This is also open 24 and 7."
              - = "All prayers are answered here."
                - "Packaged."
                - "Sent down to earth."
      - #It, too, was an impressive sight.
      - Further down the hallway was a tiny cubicle.
        - #Only one angel sitting at the desk.
          - \*Not very busy at all.
            - +Sipping a Diet Dr. Pepper.
            - \*"What's going on here?"
              - +Woman wanted to know.
              - \*Her guide told her:
                - + "This is where we receive all of the 'thank you's'."

Something similar happened in our gospel lesson.

- Ten lepers were cleansed.
- Only one bothered to return and give thanks.

I. "Were Not Ten Cleansed? Where Are The Other Nine?"

A. Ten Lepers.

1. Ten people with dreaded skin diseases.
  - a. Unclean in the eyes of the world.
  - b. Required to announce their uncleanness from afar.
    - "Unclean, unclean!"
    - #Leviticus 13:45.
    - To all who came near.
2. Ten social outcasts.
  - a. Made to live in leper colonies outside of their communities.
    - Leviticus 13:46.
    - Numbers 5:2-3.
  - b. Ostracized.
    - Like people with:
      - #HIV/AIDS.
      - #Mental illness.
      - \*Too often.
      - \*In our own day and time.
3. Ten people who begged for mercy.
  - a. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"
  - b. Luke 17:13.
4. Ten people who were cleansed.
  - a. They weren't healed.
  - b. They didn't have demons cast out of them.
  - c. They were cleansed.
    - They had been unclean.
    - Now they are cleansed.
    - #Luke 17:14,17.
5. Ten people who were sent off to see the priests.
  - a. Who could declare them clean.
  - b. Who could allow them back into their communities.
    - Leviticus 14.
6. There were ten.

B. Only One Returned To Give Thanks.

1. Did only one make the connection?
  - a. Between his healing and Jesus.
  - b. Between Jesus and the power of God.
2. Could only one spare the time?
  - a. To return to Jesus with a word of thanks.
  - b. Before rushing home to be reunited with his loved ones.
3. Could only one make the effort?
  - a. To express his gratitude for God's grace?

4. The "one" was a Samaritan.
  - a. Half-breed.
  - b. Foreigner.
    - In the eyes of pure-blooded Jews.
  - c. Near the Temple in Jerusalem was a sign:
    - "No foreigner is to enter."
    - #That would have included Samaritans.
5. Yet:
  - a. God's grace.
  - b. Jesus' healing power.
    - Was offered to all ten.
    - Was offered to all.
    - #Jew/Samaritan/Gentile.
    - #Clean/Unclean.
6. But only one expressed gratitude for God's grace.
  - a. It has been said of the ten lepers:
    - Ten were cleansed.
    - But only one was saved.
  - b. Jesus says:
    - To the one.
    - To the Samaritan.
    - # "Your faith has saved you."
    - # "Your faith has made you well."
    - \*It's the same word in Greek.
  - c. Samaritan had made the faith connection.
    - Between Jesus and cleansing.
    - Between Jesus and salvation.

## II. Which Of Those Heavenly Angels Do We Tend To Keep Busy?

- A. We Have Many Prayer Requests.
  1. Sometimes we run out of lines on our Prayer List.
    - a. It seems to be getting longer.
      - Rather than shorter.
    - b. There are many who are suffering.
      - In body.
      - In mind.
      - In spirit.
      - #Among us.
      - #Among our loved ones.
      - #Among our acquaintances.

- c. We care about what's happening:
  - In our community.
  - In our world.
    - #We can bring all of that to God in prayer.
    - #We do well to bring all of that to God in prayer.

B. Do We Also Bring Our Thanks?

1. There is a saying in hospital chaplaincy:
  - a. "If all you get out of your sickness is well, you got cheated."
  - b. If all we focus on when we are ill or injured.
    - Is getting rid of the illness or injury.
    - Maybe we are missing:
      - #Bigger picture.
      - #Faith picture.
2. I've had a pinched nerve in my neck for several months.
  - a. It's caused:
    - Pain in my shoulder.
    - Numbness in my arm.
    - Tingling in my fingers.
  - b. I've wanted to get rid of that.
    - I have prayed.
      - #Some of you have prayed for me.
    - I've been to a chiropractor.
    - I've been doing the exercises he gave me.
    - I've cut back on my bicycle riding.
      - #I haven't cut out bike riding.
      - #But I've cut back.
  - c. All of which has helped.
    - My problem is not as bad as it was.
    - My problem is not as frequent as it was.
      - #Some of you have asked about my malady.
      - \*Thank you for that.
3. But if all that I get out of my injury is well, something is wrong.
  - a. If I don't have a greater appreciation:
    - For my health.
      - #Something is wrong.
    - For the things I'm still able to do.
      - #Something is wrong.
    - For the things I too often take for granted.
      - #Something is wrong.
    - For the healing that I've experienced.
      - #Something is wrong.
  - b. If all that we get out of our illness is well, something is wrong.
    - If there is no gratitude for God's grace, something is wrong.

4. Physical problems are not all that ail us.
  - a. Last Sunday.
    - Members of our Stewardship Committee.
    - President of our congregation.
    - I.
  - b. Attended the annual meeting of:
    - Eastern Oklahoma Conference.
    - #Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod.
  - c. Most of our time was devoted to a presentation on stewardship.
    - Pastor Mike Robinson.
    - #Assistant to the Bishop.
    - \*Southwest Texas Synod.
    - Described a modern-day leprosy in our country.
    - #Affluenza (sickness caused by affluence).
    - \*There are twice as many shopping malls as high schools.
    - \*There are more cars (203 million).
    - +Than licensed drivers.
    - =I found that a little hard to believe.
    - Until I drove by a car dealership this week.
    - #With hundreds of cars sitting on the lot.
    - \*Waiting for us to buy them.
    - That was just one car dealer.
    - #How many others are there?
    - \*In Tulsa.
    - \*In Oklahoma.
    - \*In the rest of the country.
    - +Each with acres of cars.
    - =Waiting to be sold.
    - \*For every \$1 that we earn on average.
    - +We spend \$1.20.
    - =In the last four years.
    - More Americans declared bankruptcy.
    - #Than graduated from college.
5. Where is God in all of this?
  - a. Have we forgotten where it all comes from?
  - b. Have we forgotten to whom everything truly belongs?
  - c. Have we forgotten to return and give thanks?
6. Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!
  - a. He does.
  - b. Jesus cleanses us.
    - “The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.”
    - #1 John 1: 7.
    - Cleanses us of our greed.
    - Cleanses us of our lack of gratitude.

7. It is God's grace.
  - a. Not only to bless us:
    - With our health.
      - #Physical.
      - #Mental.
    - With our skills and talents.
    - With our financial resources.
  - b. But God also blesses us.
    - With that faith connection.
      - #To see the hand of God.
        - \*When we are well.
          - +When our health begins to fail.
        - \*When we are receiving.
          - +When we are giving.
    - With opportunities to use our time and talents.
      - #For our own benefit.
      - #For the benefit of other people.
      - #For God's glory.
    - With generous hearts.
      - #To be good financial stewards.
        - \*Our stewardship theme for this season.
          - +**GIVE GOD FIVE.**
            - =Hence, the hands suspended above your heads.
            - =To increase our level of financial support.
              - By \$5 per person per week.
                - #About the cost of one meal.
                  - \*At a fast food restaurant.
        - \*On the Stewardship CD I brought home last Sunday.
          - +Number of helpful resources.
          - +One suggests a healthy model of financial stewardship.
            - =10-10-80.
              - 10% of your income to give to the church.
                - #For the work of ministry.
              - 10% for savings.
                - #For the future.
                - #For a rainy day.
              - 80% to live on.

Concl: In the stewardship packets you received in the mail.

- You have a Time and Talent Survey.

  - #It's a way of saying thanks.

- You have a Statement of Intent card.

  - #To indicate your level of financial support.

  - #It's another way of saying thanks.

As you fill those out.

As you prepare to return those in two weeks.

- Do it with prayer.

- Do it with thankful prayer.

  - #Give that "thank you" angel in heaven lots more to do.