

**Luke Series #10**  
**“The Importance of Being Thankful” - Luke 17:11-19**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**A. *Sherlock Holmes***

1. Am one of those who've been entertained by the tales of Sherlock Holmes
2. Brilliant powers of observation and deduction to solve countless crimes
3. But we see a different side of Holmes in *The Adventure of the Naval Treaty*
4. Find him studying with infinite care a rose planted in a window box
5. He says to Dr. Watson . . .
  - a. “There is nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion.”
  - b. “Our highest assurance of the goodness of God is to be found in the flowers.”
  - c. “All other things, our powers, our desires, our food, are really necessary for our existence.”
  - d. “But this rose is an extra. Its smell and color are embellishments of life, not a condition necessary to it.”
  - e. “It is only goodness which gives extras, and so I say again that we have much hope from the flowers.”
6. I agree with Holmes but would take the idea farther
  - a. even mundane things reveal the awesome goodness of God
  - b. Holmes said food was a necessity to our existence, but think of the variety of foods God has given
  - c. the tastes, the flavors - He could have made it all taste like poi or playdough
  - d. oranges, lemons, pineapples
  - e. Mushroom, Swiss, Bacon burger at Hamburger Hamlet
  - f. french fries fresh out of the oil from Great Central Steak and Hoagie
  - g. homemade buttermilk biscuits and gravy
  - h. Haagen Daas french vanilla
  - i. any Godiva chocolate
7. Or what about the colors of creation itself
  - a. God could have painted the world in army green
  - b. (it seems there are some who would have preferred it that way, and are trying to)
  - c. blue sky, green grass
  - d. the incredible hues of a summer sunset
  - e. the glory and majesty of a clear night sky
  - f. the rich colors of a field of flowers

- yellows, reds, blues, pinks, purple, white
- 8. I could go on and on speaking about all the extras God has built in to creation — in fact you're probably thinking of a few right now
- 9. Point is, the goodness of God is displayed all around us
- 10. Do we see it and appreciate it? Or are we like the blind who see not?
- 11. Even more importantly, how thankful are we for God's goodness?

**B. Today**

1. Being thankful to God is a part of the Christian life that seems to be lacking from many lives
2. In our study today, we're going to see that thankfulness is a part of faith that turns the Christian life into a thing of joy instead of duty

**C. A Special Note . . .**

1. If your Christian life is more of a cheerless duty than a joy, this message is for you
2. If you look at others worshipping the Lord in abandon and think, "I wish I felt like that," this message is for you.
3. If you realize you are missing out on something critical to the Christian life presented in the bible — today's study should go a long way to helping you fit the pieces together into a complete picture

**II. TEXT**

**A. Vs. 11-13**

**11 Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.**

**12 Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off.**

**13 And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"**

1. The wording here is difficult to translate
2. Actually, Jesus is walking along the border between Samaria and Galilee
3. Since the Jews of Galilee despised the Samaritans, and the Samaritans felt the same way about the Jews,
  - a. the border zone was a no man's land
  - b. both regions would avoid living near the area
  - c. that's why it's surprising to find a village there
  - d. this village must have been comprised of the very dregs of society

- e. they were unable to find a place that would accept them in either Galilee or Samaria, so they had settle in the no man's land between the two regions
  - f. in modern terms, we would call this a refugee camp
4. And living near this pitiful village is a small group of even *more* pitiful people = 10 lepers
    - a. the law required anyone with leprosy to separate themselves
      - if upwind, a min. of 50'
      - if downwind 100'
    - b. when strangers approached, had to cover their mouth and cry out - "Unclean"
    - c. result = felt terribly alone; utterly cut off from normal life
    - d. lived in the wilderness surrounding villages and cities
      - depended on the generosity of the kind
      - relatives and friends would take food out to them and leave it somewhere
      - then, when they left, they would come and get it
    - e. not remedy for leprosy except divine intervention
  5. They say misery loves company and that seems to be the case here
    - a. 10 lepers have found some sense of companionship in each other
    - b. they are 10 hopeless men living near a wretched little village smack dab in the middle of no where
    - c. if ever there was a picture of hopelessness — friend, this is it
    - d. because the village was so pitiful, these men must have been just barely clinging to life
    - e. they had no hope — they were just bidding their time waiting to die
  6. But notice what happens — one day, in the midst of their complete despair, one of them looks up and sees a crowd headed their way
    - a. the lepers have heard the rumors of a new teacher who heals the sick, raises the dead, and yes, even heals lepers
    - b. he puts two and two together and concludes this must be Jesus coming toward them
    - c. so he says to his friends, "Hey guys look — it's Jesus!"
    - d. they scramble to their feet as best as their withered limbs will let them
    - e. and they begin to cry out to Him to notice them
  7. Does your life and situation seem hopeless?
    - a. does it seem like others have abandoned you?
    - b. do you feel isolated and alone?
    - c. do you fell like you're living in a no man's land with no way out
    - d. like those lepers, it seems you are slowly wasting away?
  8. Look up — for Jesus is walking through this place
    - a. Jesus specializes in walking into the midst of hopelessness and bringing hope

- b. He is here now
- c. but you must look up and call out to Him

**B. Vs. 14**

**14 So when He saw them, He said to them, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.**

1. Jesus took a different tack with these 10 lepers than He did with other people He healed
2. Rather than walking over to them and placing His hands on them as He did with other lepers, He speaks to them from a distance
3. And instead of saying, “Be healed,” He tells them to go to the priests.
4. Why this strange instruction?
5. In Israel, the priests were the one’s who diagnosed both leprosy.
  - a. in Leviticus, God gave an elaborate procedure they were to use to diagnose leprosy
  - b. and then He gave an even more elaborate and some would say downright strange procedure of offering sacrifices when a leper was cleansed
  - c. both the OT and Jewish history tell us that until Jesus, no Jewish leper ever recovered
  - d. in other words, God gave detailed instructions for an ritual that the priests never had an opportunity to use
  - e. they would learn it dutifully, but then they would never use it
  - f. kind of like algebra and calculus
    - remember thinking, “Why do I have to learn this. I’ll never need it.”
    - sure enough, unless you became an engineer, you didn’t
    - well there were a bunch of priests in training who asked, ”Why do we have to learn this? We’re never going to need it.”
  - g. so why did God include it in the law?
  - h. so that it would remain unused for centuries and people would realize the utter hopelessness of leprosy
  - i. they would realize only God can heal leprosy
  - j. then when Jesus came and lepers began a steady stream to the priests they would go — “Hold on here!”
  - k. God meant it all to be a big lesson that Jesus is God!
6. So Jesus tells these men to go to the priests and show themselves
  - a. they would immediately realize why He told them to do this
  - b. it meant they were going to be made clean
7. Notice their response: They went just as He had instructed them

8. We need to realize these men had faith
  - a. they could have sat down and said,
  - b. "I'll wait to move till I see the proof of my healing."
  - c. this wasn't their reaction
  - d. they took Jesus at His word and began making their way to the nearest priest
  - e. the wording is very clear - as they went, they were healed
  - f. in other words, their healing came as a process while they went to the priest
9. You and I are called to a trust in God that leads to instant obedience
  - a. we are called to live in reliance on God even when the evidence is against us
  - b. we are called to live in confidence that what God has said will come to pass, whether we see it or not
  - c. as Paul says to the Corinthians, we walk by faith, not by sight  
[2 Cor. 5:7]
  - d. we tend to say, "Oh Lord, show me and I'll believe."
  - e. God replies, "Believe, and I'll show you."
10. Whatever else you say about these lepers, recognize their faith in the word of Jesus

**C. Vs. 15-18**

**15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God,**

**16 and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.**

**17 So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"**

**18 "Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?"**

1. While Jesus accepted the thanks of the one, He grieved over the thanklessness of the 9
2. Someone might object at this point and say, "Wait a minute; wasn't it right for the 9 to be obedient to Jesus and go to the priests like they were told? Didn't this one man who returned disobey Jesus by coming back?"
3. The answer to both questions is a simple, "No!"
4. I'm sure Samaritan went to the priests after giving his thanks to Jesus
5. We need to realize that true gratitude never violates true obedience
6. The problem with the 9 is that they lacked gratitude

- a. they had had faith in Jesus for their own healing
- b. and once they had it, they went to the priests to make sure they kept it
- c. their faith was good as far as it went
- d. the problem is that it didn't go far enough
7. For faith to be complete, for faith to be mature, it must find itself responding to the goodness of God with gratitude
8. Gratitude is the joy of faith
9. Think about what happened in this story
  - a. the one man who returned, fell at Jesus feet and worshipped Him
  - b. he poured out His thanks
  - c. with a loud voice he glorified God
  - d. and Jesus stood over Him and spoke to him
  - e. in other words — they entered into fellowship together
  - f. but the other 9 never entered into that fellowship
  - g. so while they enjoyed the healing of their leprosy, they came to know the joy of knowing Jesus
10. Many people have put their faith in Jesus and been healed from the spiritual leprosy of sin
  - a. but like the 9, they go to church and join the community of those who also have been cleansed of sin
  - b. but there is no relationship with Jesus
  - c. there is little or no gratitude for what Jesus has done for them
  - d. they think of their salvation like a business contract
    - Jesus died for me
    - I believe it
    - I'm saved
    - hurrah!
11. Can I make a confession?
  - a. all too often I find that I am like the 9
  - b. I treat the Lord too casually
  - c. I take my salvation for granted
  - d. or, I pray for God to deliver me from some new mess
  - e. He does — I wipe my forehead and I go off without a word of thanks
12. Is that where you are?
  - a. you know you're saved
    - you believe all the right things
    - in fact would even fight for them to the shedding of blood
  - b. but it seems something vital is missing from your Christian life?
  - c. I would venture a guess that you lack a heart of gratitude to the Lord for what He has done and does do in your life

- d. come bow before Him — tell Him how much you love and appreciate Him for saving you
- 13. Faith isn't complete till it brings us to the feet of Jesus in humble adoration and thanksgiving
- 14. There is something else here as well . . .
- 15. The one who returned was a Samaritan;
  - a. a foreigner
  - b. a man any self-respecting Jew would call a spiritual nimnal
  - c. but he is the only one of the 9 who returned
  - d. and the implication is that at least some of them were Jews
- 16. When he returned, he glorified God with a loud voice
  - a. he didn't care who heard him
  - b. his whole being was wrapped up in one thing —
  - c. worship!
- 17. We often say how we need to see people won to Christ because its good for us old timers to have some new blood
  - a. the idea is that as we walk with the Lord for a few years, we get a bit apathetic and complacent
  - b. new believers come in with a fresh excitement and they re-invigorate the rest of us
- 18. But what we find here should but an end to that kind of thinking
  - a. it was the Jews among the lepers who should have known to come and worship at Jesus feet
  - b. after all, they had the revelation of God in the OT
  - c. instead it was a Samaritan, a foreigner, the new kid!
- 19. It is the older saints who should be showing the new Christians what it means to worship with a loud voice
  - a. it's the senior saints who should be pouring it out for Jesus
  - b. it's those of us who have a few years under our belt who should be showing baby believers how to pray, study, evangelize, worship and bust the devil in the chops
  - c. if we have to look to new believers to be an example to the rest of us - something is very wrong!

**D. V. 19**

**19 And He said to him, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”**

- 1. Because this man returned with thanks to Jesus, He got another blessing from Him.
- 2. Before, Jesus had told the lepers to go to the priests and as they did, they were “cleansed”
- 3. Meaning their leprosy was healed

4. But to this man He says, “You are well.”
  - a. literally = “You are saved.”
  - b. he was made well, not only in body but in soul and spirit too

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. *The Point***

1. The point is this = God delights to pour more and more of Himself into the grateful heart
2. When we come to God with thanksgiving, we pour ourselves out in recognizing His goodness
3. God then moves to fill us with Himself
4. We see it with this man
5. And we’ll see it in our own lives as we express our gratitude to God

#### **B. *Think About It***

1. How do we get a thankful heart?
2. First, repent if you’ve been unthankful
3. Second, ask Him to give you a thankful heart
4. Third, think about what you’d be today if it weren’t for Jesus?
5. Fourth, cultivate thankfulness with those around you - specially at home!