

Giving Thanks - The Thankful Samaritan

Luke 17:11-19

INTRODUCTION

Every year in the U.S., we celebrate Thanksgiving. For many it is all about parades, football and turkey dinners. Some of us celebrate it as more than a day off work, and remember that it commemorated the Pilgrims' thanking God for their survival. We too give thanks to God for his blessings. In this study we will examine the story of the Thankful Samaritan, and the lessons we can take from it, which can help us to live in an attitude of thankfulness all year long.

Ice Breaker (Optional): How will you spend your Thanksgiving Day and what is one thing you were thankful for?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. The Reason for Thanksgiving

Luke 17:11-19 NLT - 11 As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria. 12 As he entered a village there, ten lepers stood at a distance, 13 crying out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 He looked at them and said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy. 15 One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, "Praise God!" 16 He fell to the ground at Jesus' feet, thanking him for what he had done. This man was a Samaritan. 17 Jesus asked, "Didn't I heal ten men? Where are the other nine? 18 Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" 19 And Jesus said to the man, "Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you."

In the Gospel of Luke, we read that Jesus healed ten lepers. The one who returned discovered his healing at what point in his journey? Rather than continuing on his way, what did he think was more important for him to do in response?

Just like the nine lepers, we may fail to recognize all that God has done for us. Read aloud Psalm 103 verses 3 through 14, *one verse at a time* and pause to reflect, thanking God for the awesome things that He has done for you. It may take some time to complete but make it your prayer.

Psalm 103:2-14 NLT - 2 Let all that I am praise the LORD; may I never forget the good things he does for me. 3 He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. 4 He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. 5 He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's! 6 The LORD gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly. 7 He revealed his character to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel. 8 The LORD is compassionate and merciful, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. 9 He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. 10 He does not punish us for all our sins; he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve. 11 For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. 12 He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west. 13 The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him. 14 For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust.

2. The Focus in Thanksgiving

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NLT - 16 Always be joyful. 17 Never stop praying. 18 Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

Psalm 50:14, 23 NLT - 14 Make thankfulness your sacrifice to God, and keep the vows you made to the Most High. ... 23 But giving thanks is a sacrifice that truly honors me. If you keep to my path, I will reveal to you the salvation of God."

If we focus on our circumstances, we will often find it difficult, if not impossible to thank and praise God. We may not be able to always be thankful 'for' everything, but we can, and should be thankful 'in' everything (1 Thes 5). According to Psalm 50, how does God view our thanks, and what is the result of offering it up to Him?

3. The Expression of Thanksgiving

Look again at Luke 17:15 - 18. The gratitude of the Samaritan was not the casual, obligatory "Thanks" which we so often dispense,

but he recognized God's great mercy and healing. In what two specific ways did the Samaritan express gratitude? In verse 18 what did Jesus commend the Samaritan for?

What would you say is the difference between thanks with praise?

Psalm 103:1 NLT - 1 A psalm of David. Let all that I am praise the LORD; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name.

If we, like David, desire to offer our praise and thanksgiving with all of our being, we may use many different expressions. How many ways can your group identify to express praise and thanks to God?

WRAP-UP

We are blessed to live in a country with a rich spiritual heritage and a tradition of giving thanks to God. God is worthy of praise because of who He is and deserving of thanks for all that He has done for us. Knowing then the surpassing grace and mercy given us by God, and focusing on Him, let us never forget to express our thanks and praise to God in genuine gratitude, overflowing from a thankful heart.

Memory Verse: 1Th 5:18 (NIV) Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs:

Challenge: Don't let the spirit of Thanksgiving slip away. This week find a place where you can be alone with God, and vocalize your sacrifice of praise. Seek out new opportunities to express your thanks and praise to God.