

## An Attitude of Thanks

*Luke 17:19*

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Bible Text: Luke 17:19 "**Jesus said to the Samaritan: "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."**

Christ is risen! **He is risen, indeed!**

**Dear friends in Christ,**

As there is a common thread that runs through all three readings, I'll attempt to preach one sermon, three times.

Now, this morning we heard a portion of Moses's last sermon. Finally, after 40 years plodding through the western coastal wilderness of the Arabian Peninsula, the people of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land. This land beyond the Jordan, says Moses, is the land that **'the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers'** (Deut. 8: 1 b ).

Then Moses recounted what the spies had reported: it's a good land. **'A land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; <sup>8a</sup> land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; <sup>9a</sup> land where bread will not be scarce, and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills. And <sup>10</sup> 'When you have eaten and are satisfied [you shall bless] the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.'**

In short, Moses is telling these 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Exodus people to set aside a Day of Thanksgiving. Not just because they've finally reached their destination, but for what God has done for them over the past 40yrs. Remember? The Lord fed you with manna, your clothes didn't wear out, and your feet didn't swell. (3,4) Yes, the Lord continued to provide for their every need.

But what did God's Exodus people do throughout those 40yrs? Well, the OT books of Exodus and Numbers reveal a litany of groaning, grumbling, and complaining! Though God provided everything they needed, it wasn't good enough. "What do we want? Better food and conditions. When do we want it? Now!"

This attitude of discontent limited their gratitude.

Generally speaking, the majority of Australians have a comfortable life. However, it's also fair to say that we aren't always happy with our lot either. Thus, we also complain about what we're lacking, or what we think we need.

And this attitude curbs our nation's gratitude, too.

Moving to the second reading. Now, I wonder if the Christians at Philippi had the same mind-set as the Israelites waiting to cross the Jordan. It seems they did, for Paul writes, ***'but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God'*** (v6). In other words, don't be dissatisfied with what you have.

Paul continues: So, you Philippians, instead of groaning, grumbling, and complaining, ***'focus on<sup>8</sup> whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.'***

Now, what makes these words so remarkable is that Paul wrote them whilst in prison. He has every reason to groan, grumble and complain about being stuck in a cold, dark cell. But, instead, he focuses on the care and concern shown to him by the Philippian church, and the monetary gift he has just received. Even as a prisoner, Paul can praise God and give Him glory.

Now, any Christian in a Roman prison awaiting their trial (or an unknown fate) would justifiably question God's intentions. They could just as easily be acquitted as sentenced to death. But not Paul. He is content no matter where he is – or what his fate might be – for he knows that ***'God is working for the good of those who love him ....'*** (Rom 8:28)

If you consider this rationally, it's absurd. But faith believes God's promises.

So, this brings us to the gospel lesson and the faith of the Samaritan leper. Now, Luke doesn't tell us why the other 9 lepers didn't turn back to thank Jesus. We could speculate, but we still wouldn't know. However, the wonderful thing is that the compassionate, loving, Jesus didn't undo the other 9 lepers' healing just because they were ungrateful.

And that's good news for us too. You see, our loving, heavenly Father is a giving God who just can't stop giving. Now, Martin Luther describes it like this: 'God continues to provide "everything we need for this life, such as food and clothing, home and property, money and possessions" and much, much more. But being a 'giving God' He gives these gifts to the believer and unbeliever; to the grateful and ungrateful; and yes, to you and me too. (Sm.Cat., LP: Expl. 4th Petition)

Now, my friends, just because the Samaritan came back is he a better person than the others? No, not better! but a healed leper who received an additional gift. A gift which Jesus also gave by grace - but a gift which can only be received through faith.

Having said that, the nature of Jesus' special gift isn't that obvious when we hear His parting words: "**Rise and go; your faith has made you well.**" Because what immediately comes to mind is physical healing – but that's already occurred on their way to the priests. So, in this context a better translation would be: "Rise and go; your faith has saved you."

So, what is it: Healing or Saving? Well, providing us with good gifts isn't the object of God's grace, just as healing the ten lepers wasn't the point of Jesus' healing miracle. What's more, Christ need not have come to earth to heal the sick, the blind, or feed the hungry, etc. But Jesus did have to come here to save us from Sin. To lay down His precious life on the cross for the salvation of the world – for yours and mine.

Now although the gift of salvation is for all people, it's received only through faith. That's why the Samaritan leper received much more than physical healing: he got Jesus.

But not only the Samaritan – soon you too will receive this gift. You see, by being in the Lord's house today you'll receive something those who are absent won't. You will receive Jesus' precious body and blood – given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins – as you eat the bread, and drink the cup.

So, my friends, let us give thanks to our gracious and giving God for all His gifts because life isn't about what we don't have, and think we need. But since our loving Saviour, Jesus, promised to be with us '**to the very end of the age**', we have Him forever and ever. And that's certainly something to be grateful for. **Amen.**

Christ is risen! **He is risen, indeed!**

**Now may the peace of God, which passes all human understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**

---

Sermon by Pastor Ernie Kiss 1 May 2022