

Summary of the Sermon:

Come to Jesus (Week 5) - One Samaritan Came Back (Luke 17.11-19)

Luke seems to signal two intended takeaways from this wonderful story that's unique to his gospel:

1) First, Luke goes out of his way to draw our attention to a single detail in the story - it was a Samaritan that came back (v. 16b).

This is the second time in Luke's gospel that a Samaritan is the "hero" or exemplary character in an episode: just seven chapters earlier, we're given the parable of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10.25-37).

This reminds us that often those with the greatest spiritual acuity are the ones we least expect to have it.

This is yet another example of a through line in the gospels: those you think will respond well to Jesus don't (the Jewish leadership), while those you think won't give two hoots about Jesus love and embrace Him (e.g., tax collectors, prostitutes, sinners, and, yes, Samaritans). A case in point: in John 3, we're told about a Jewish leader named Nicodemus who is sincerely befuddled by Jesus (covered in week #1 of our "Come to Jesus" series), while just one chapter later, it is a Samaritan woman who becomes so enthralled with Him and what He offered her that she runs off to tell her whole village about Him.

If it's true that Samaritans and other marginal or ostracized groups "get" Jesus in a way that many others of us don't, that leads us to ask - what insight, embodiment, and encouragement about faith or Christ are we forgoing if these people aren't in our churches or our lives?

And who exactly are the Samaritans in our day and time? Well, who are the people you or your identity groups inherently distrust, disdain, or diminish? Those are your Samaritans.

2) Second, this is a passage all about gratitude - that Samaritan came back to offer his boisterous, heartfelt thanks to Jesus (v. 15-16).

Apparently, the two easiest words to forget or leapfrog in the spiritual life are "Thank you."

Like those nine lepers in a rush to see the local priest, be pronounced clean, offer the appropriate sacrifices, and reenter life fully, we too can hurry about for very good reasons and with very good aims - caring for family, connecting with friends, working hard, even serving and ministering to others.



And when we do, we jump past a very important first or grounding step - gratitude to the God who is in all and who gives all.

As psychologist Robert Holden puts it, "The real gift of gratitude is that the more thankful you are, the more present in your own life you become." When we take the time to be thankful in an intentional way, we become more and more aware of our very lives, instead of them being a mere blur speeding by.

The great reformer Martin Luther called the thankfulness of the Samaritan leper here the single greatest act of worship in the entire Bible. We're left to ask - when was the last time my gratitude to God was as loud and unabashedly reverent as the Samaritan leper's in v. 15-16?

And don't forget - this story contains two healings, not one (or, at the very least, a two stage healing). All 10 lepers were cured of leprosy; only one - the Samaritan who came back - was "saved" or "made whole/well" by his faith expressed as gratitude (v. 19). One healing was skin deep; the other was body, mind, heart, and soul. This is the power of purposeful gratitude in our lives too...

A Week of Gratitude

This week, find a little time every evening to be thankful for the big and small things of the past 24 hours. Instead of letting the days just fly by, let's be as deliberate in our gratitude as the Samaritan leper was in his.

Try writing down sentences, phrases, or words of thanks on the same sheet (or sheets) of paper all week long. Or in your journal, if you keep one.

By Friday or Saturday, you might be amazed a) by the sheer volume of your thankfulness, and b) what you might have missed had you not taken the time to be intentional in your grateful review of each day.

And by week's end, be mindful of how your own emotions and coping have improved: happiness, joy, optimism, and even our ability to manage adversity are all improved by purposeful gratitude, multiple medical and psychological studies have shown.

Resourcing You

1) A quote to remember - from Justo Gonzalez, a noted church historian, when writing about this story in Luke 17:

"This is the great reversal of Jesus: those who are most marginalized and excluded are also able to be the most grateful to Him. Those whose experience of rejection has been the most painful may well come to the gospel with an unparalleled sense of joy."

2) Here's a great overview of all the "outcast" groups that were drawn to Jesus, and that He loved, followed by an article that focuses on the mentally-ill as a marginalized group that He would prioritize:

[5 Groups of Outcasts That Jesus Loved](#)

[Jesus and the Social Outcasts](#)

3) Want to dig into the spiritual practice of purposeful gratitude a little more? Try these articles...first from Henri Nouwen, second from Richard Foster:

[How Gratitude Breaks the Chains of Resentment - Henri J. M. Nouwen](#)

[Simple Words of Gratitude - Richard J. Foster](#)