

## “Cultivate A Thankful Heart”

As many in our nation gather with family and friends to celebrate Thanksgiving Day, Christian, remember that it is God’s will to give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thess. 5:18). Now, Paul doesn’t mean that you are to give thanks for all circumstances, such as “I’m thankful I’m in so much pain!” Instead, he tells us to give thanks in all circumstances. Amid trials and sufferings, we also turn to give thanks to God for His providential blessings. “Count your many blessings/name them one by one/And it will surprise you what the Lord has done,” Johnson Oatman writes in his beloved hymn.

Giving thanks to God is a learned habit, cultivated by acknowledging the Lord’s blessings. In Luke 17, Jesus passes through Samaria and Galilee on his way to Jerusalem. *“He was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance.”* A wide range of skin maladies were placed under the heading, “leprosy.” While we don’t know exactly their skin malady, we see the ramifications. Besides physical deformations, there were also social and spiritual ramifications. They “stood at a distance.” Socially, anyone with leprosy was ostracized, placed outside the city until he or she was healed. This protected others in the city from becoming ill. Spiritually, this distance kept them from the temple, the presence of God.

When they see Jesus, they all “lifted up their voices, saying, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.’” When Jesus saw them *“he said to them, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went they were cleansed.”* All of the lepers received cleansing. Yet, only one “saw that he was healed.” He responds in three ways. He praises God, he falls at Jesus’s feet, and he thanks Jesus. Even though all the lepers were cleansed, only the one who gives thanks is made whole. Bodily cleansing is not the same as the healing of the soul. The King James Version translates Jesus’s statement, “thy faith hath made thee whole” (v. 19).

Because we are created by God and for God, giving thanks to God makes us more human, for it is fitting to praise the Creator. Yet, we do not give thanks to an unknown God, but the God revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we are healed by forgiveness. He alone makes us whole. Scripture instructs us *in all things* to give thanks because giving thanks is to become the settled and normal habit of our souls. As the act of faith, giving thanks to Christ makes us human.

Cultivate a thankful heart by putting before you the blessings of God. Cultivate a thankful heart by gathering for worship, centered on God’s saving works in Jesus Christ, with the posture of humility and adoration, for he is good, and his steadfast love endures forever.

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