

December 3, 2023

The Power of Thanksgiving – part 3 - Be the One

You probably thought it was poor planning on my part to have the Thanksgiving series conclude this late, after the Christmas Celebration has already begun with all the decoration and such. **But this is intentional. Here's why.**

There is a danger for all of us who are often *thinking forward*, and that's the danger of forgetting to be *thanking backward*.

This is a bad habit of mine. I'm working on it.

Does anyone else push full throttle ahead forgetting to look backward and express gratitude?

According to statistics, only 1 out of 10 people are good at this.

"They actually do a study on this!?"

Actually, I'm basing that statistic on a study Luke did in his gospel.

Today's title is "Be the One"--as in be the one out of ten that experiences **"the power of thanksgiving.**

Luke 17:11–14 (NIV) Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance ¹³

Let's pause right there for some background information.

Leprosy: Older OT translations, used this word "leprosy" as a translation of the laws of Moses about infectious skin diseases. That word is being replaced in modern translations in the OT with the phrase "infectious skin diseases" because the law actually covered all kinds.

The NT word used here (17:12) is the Greek word "lepros" so it is still translated "leprous" or "leprosy". But when we use the word in modern times we are usually referring only to one kind of skin disease, Hansen's disease, called leprosy.

The diseased person must live alone outside the camp, wear torn clothes, keep his or her hair disheveled, cover his or her upper lip, and cry out "unclean, unclean" (Lev 13:45–46).

Can you imagine how this went down? If you don't know much about the fear of leprosy in Jesus day, it was far worse than the fear of Cancer today! Leprosy is contagious. And outwardly, it can look hideous.

Imagine 10 men sitting by a fire in a hidden wash away from town. They looked as though they climbed out of the grave. A number of them had toeless feet. Others had ulcerated stubs for hands, some had a few knobby fingers remaining. Their skin had barnacle looking growths covering much of it. Their faces looked more like cadaver faces.

To make matters worse, public fears, and prejudices, caused lepers to live far from every healthy person, they gathered in leper colonies. People who loved them provided for them, at a distance only.

If they came too close to a crowd people would begin to throw rocks, and shout at them to leave.

Let's hide by the road somewhere then show ourselves and shout loudly, *'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us'?*

¹³ and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" ¹⁴ When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

BE THE ONE ...

1. That RISKS the first step

All 10 risked taking the first step!

So that's what they did.

The crowd looked to see what Jesus would do. Jesus smiled. And gave simple instructions. "Go show yourselves to the priests" (v. 14a). This is what someone was supposed to do when their leprosy was cured as outlined in Leviticus 14.

The ten men looked at each other. So, now what do they do? They aren't cured. Was this a test?

Perhaps one of them thought, what do I have to lose, and started walking toward Jerusalem. Soon they were all walking together. And suddenly...

"As they went, they were cleansed" (v. 14b). This is another way of saying they were miraculously, and marvelously, and collectively healed! They didn't have mirrors, but they could see one another. And they could see their transformed hands.

Their cadaverous faces sprouted new life—ears, noses, eyebrows, lashes, and hairlines reappeared. Their toeless, ulcerated stubs became whole feet again. Their knobby stubs grew fingers. Their barnacled skin turned soft and normal again. They erupted in a wild celebration whooping, hollering, and wild laughter.

Now they could go see the priests! And they began to run... all but one!

Nine out of ten continued on their way, undoubtedly focused on their newfound health, a vision of a forward-thinking hopeful future AGAIN for the first time in years. **Only one of them thought to be backward-thanking.**

The 9 were happy. Perhaps they even thought they were grateful. But what do you call gratitude that is not focused toward the source of that gratitude?

What is that? Is it really gratitude?

BE THE ONE ...

2. That **RUSHES** to respond

The Samaritan rushed to respond to the giver of the gift!

Luke 17:15 (NIV) One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice.

Only “the one” stopped his “forward progress” and rushed back. The text says he *came back, praising God in a loud voice!!*

The danger for us today lies in becoming **so consumed with our forward-thinking goals, ambitions, and dreams that we forget to look backward and express gratitude.**

The busy season of Christmas can exacerbate this tendency in us if we are not careful.

BE THE ONE ...

3. That **RECIPROCATES** with thanks

Luke 17:16 (NIV) One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

- Reciprocating with a grateful “thank you” is a good thing to do.
- Ignoring the person is a bad thing to do.
- Ignoring God who does a good thing is a REALLY bad thing to do.
- Doing this habitually...is a REALLY REALLY bad thing to do.
- Only the Samaritan chose a good thing to do.

He came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him

Something happened to “one of them” that went more than skin deep!

“He put two and two together.”

Actually, ... *“He put 1 and 1 together, and he treated them as 1.*

What do I mean? He saw something with the “eyes of his heart” the 9 Jewish men did not (and should have)! “He put 1 and 1 together, and he treated them as 1.” 1 savior and 1 God, were obviously connected!” So he thanked them both! *He praises God, and gives thanks to Jesus!*

This is a Christ centered praise to God. This becomes a pattern in the New Testament (HINT: the Study questions on the back will help you to see this.) This is to be our pattern.

The Samaritan bows like one Worshiping before God himself! Jesus does not correct him. He does something quite different.

Luke 17:17-18 Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?”

What caused the blindness for the 9? Were they so self absorbed in their future thinking they simply forgot? I think there is more here.

There is a deadly problem here—God was not the center of their gratitude.

If God who is the SOURCE is not at the center of your gratitude what is the center of your gratitude? Your own happiness? God is the source, not us!

By failing to glorify God and return thanks to Jesus, they missed the greatest possible moment of their existence. How common this problem is these days.

BE THE ONE ...

4. That RECEIVES more

Luke 17:19 (NIV) Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

Meaning this: Your faith has **SAVED** you!

The word here is the Greek word **σώζω** (sōzō) which means: Save, rescue, make well.

10 were healed physically. But only the one was healed through and through, physically and spiritually.

His believing response connected his faith with Jesus personally! He did not achieve salvation by his faith response; he received it as a gift from Jesus.

Will you be like the 9, or will you be like the one?

- **Will you be the one who risks the first step?**
- **Will you be the one who rushes to respond to God’s grace?**
- **Will you be the one who reciprocates with thanksgiving for new mercies every day?**

- **Will you be the one who receives MORE?**

Thank you for coming today. I hope you have been encouraged.

1. **Connect Card** (information Table, gift bag for you)
2. **Prayer Cards (in giving box)**
3. **Or Prayer TEAM** (after this 4 minute video, and wrap up)

Talk It Over

The Power of Thanksgiving
Part 3 Be The One

SMALL TALK

1. Have you ever felt overwhelming gratitude? What was the situation, and how did it impact you?

VIEWPOINT

2. **Read Luke 17:11-19.** What stands out to you in this passage, and why do you think Luke included this story in his Gospel account?
3. Discuss Jesus' response to the Samaritan who returned. What does it reveal about the relationship between faith, gratitude, and salvation?
4. What do you notice about who the "praise" and "thanks" is directed to in **Luke 17:15-16** compared to who the praise and thanks is directed to in **1 Corinthians 15:57; 2 Corinthians 2:14; 9:15; Colossians 1:12-14; 3:17**? Are these similar or dissimilar? Any conclusions?

GETTING PERSONAL

5. Reflect on a recent experience where you might have forgotten to express gratitude. What may have caused this? How could remembering to give thanks have changed the situation?
6. How does "the power of thanksgiving" contribute to the strength and depth of our connections with others? How about our connection with God?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

Action Step Challenge. Let's not be so forward thinking that we forget to be backward thanking. What will you do this week to make sure to be more reflective and backward thanking?