

Thanksgiving Message 2021

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, November 21, 2021

OCC SUNDAY

Today is OCC Sunday! Before we dismiss the children for Children’s Church and the Nursery, let us take some time to celebrate this special occasion! I praise God for OCC and this annual opportunity to show forth His love to the nations! It is our hope that the Lord would use these shoeboxes to change lives for both time and eternity. Thus said...

NOTE 1 – Allow me to say thank you to a great many people...

- 1) Thank you to Ruth for her ‘leadership, diligence and vision.’
- 2) Thank you to those who packed the 35–40 church shoeboxes.
- 3) Thank you to the individuals & families who packed shoeboxes.
- 4) Thank you to those who ‘financially’ contributed to this ministry.

NOTE 2 – Our combined efforts have helped to make this a tremendous year! Total number?

NOTE 3 – I would love for Ruth and the children of the assembly to come on up and lay hands on these boxes. It is fitting for the children to help us pray since these boxes will be going to children in Christ’s Name.
(PRAYER)

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us today! Whether you are here in person or watching via the livestream, you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes. We have much to cover in a relatively short amount of time.

TO THE WORD

Happy Thanksgiving! May God bless you and yours this holiday season! This morning it is my privilege to offer a standalone sermon on the theme of “thankfulness” —a sermon born of a timeless and timely account from the Gospel of Luke. Let us turn to Luke 17 to consider the following event from the life and ministry of Jesus Christ...

Luke 17:11–19 (NIV)

11 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 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.

15 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. 17 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?” 19 Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

KEY – Let us examine this selection one segment at a time. There is much to consider within...

V. 11

This account begins with verse 11...

Luke 17:11 (Emphasis Mine)

11 Now **on his way to Jerusalem**, Jesus traveled along the border between **Samaria** and **Galilee**.

FYI 1 – This verse is easy to overlook, but it is significant as it sets the context for our account. At this point in the Gospel narrative, Jesus and His followers are on the move. Since Luke 9:51, Christ has shifted the focus of His ministry away from Galilee, getting closer and closer to a final confrontation in Jerusalem. Herein, Jesus is traveling within the border area of the southern extremity of the province of Galilee (i.e., close to the area of the despised Samaritans)...

FYI 2 – There was an ancient animosity between the Jews and the Samaritan, as the Jews believed them to be “half-breeds” and “contaminated” with foreign blood. This point will prove significant in the passages to come.

V. 12a

Let us now look to the opening portion of verse 12...

Luke 17:12 (Emphasis Mine)

12 As he was going into a village, **ten men** who had **leprosy** met him. . . .

FYI 1 – If we are going to understand this account, we must understand the affliction these men suffered. Leprosy in the ancient world was debilitating affliction in every conceivable way. In ancient Israel, if the symptoms of leprosy appeared in a person, it was the responsibility of the priest(s) to decide if the skin condition was leprosy or some other ailment...

FYI 2 – Because of the need to control the spread of a disease for which they had no cure, lepers were required to be isolated from the rest of society. While thus excluded, lepers were required to wear mourning clothes, leave their hair in disorder, and cry “UNCLEAN” to warn the healthy of their proximity. Forced to live outside of the community, they were regarded as outcasts cursed of God...

Q. Can you imagine such a life?

NOTE 1 – Consider the physical trauma such individuals experienced. What would it be like to watch your body waste away (e.g., to watch a finger decompose before your eyes or to lose an ear, nose or foot)? What would it be like to live as a scarred monster in a world that prioritizes physical beauty and/or appearance?

NOTE 2 – Consider the familial trauma such individuals experienced. What would it be like to lose every family connection in an instant? What would it be like to be removed from loved ones (e.g., father, mother, siblings, wife, children, etc.)—seeing them only if they brought you food and only then at a distance? To never know touch again, to be utterly alone, except for those who are dying slowly from the same affliction!

NOTE 3 – Consider their social trauma. What would it be like to live on the fringe of society? To know that no one wanted you around because they were frightened by your appearance and presence? How would you cope with having no purpose, role or place in the greater community—forced to live off of the charity of those who deemed you accursed! Imagine having to scream “UNCLEAN” as a warning of your presence? What would it be like to live with the most miserable, broken, or undesirable of life (toll taken in kind)?

NOTE 4 – Consider the spiritual trauma herein? What would it be like to exist as a spiritual outcast, knowing that others believed you were rejected by God because of a condition over which you had no power? What would it be like to believe you had irrevocably wronged the Lord, believing yourself to be the object of His scorn? What would it be like to believe that He hated you personally and deeply?

FYI 3 – It is worth noting that ancient Jewish rabbis believed curing a leper to be as difficult as raising the dead. After all, the last documented case of healing a leper was some eight-centuries old (i.e., during the ministry of the prophet Elisha cf. 2 Kings 5).

VV. 12b–13

With these sentiments in mind, let us move along in the account...

Luke 17:12–13

12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance 13 and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

NOTE 1 – Notice that the lepers are just outside the camp.

NOTE 2 – Notice that these lepers were banded together (10).

NOTE 3 – Notice that the men stood at a distance and called out.

KEY – These elements make sense in light of what we have just discussed in v. 12a.

Q. What—specifically—did these men call out?

A. They cried out: “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

FYI 1 – Apparently the ten lepers recognized Jesus and called out in kind. At this point in His ministry, Jesus was a well-known figure to the nation. And what did they ask for? For Jesus to “have pity” on them! There are some depths herein...

FYI 2 – The phrase “have pity” translates a Greek verb meaning “to be great concerned about someone in need; to have compassion for someone.” Thus, this could be translated as, “Jesus, Master, show compassion to or concern for us!” Notice that they did not ask for healing (specifically), but for pity. They were asking for whatever Jesus might give them: e.g., food, clothing, shelter—ANY form of aid...

Q. Did they expect/believe for Jesus to heal them?

A. This verse does not seem to suggest so—just HELP!

FYI 3 – Lastly, notice that they called out loudly (v. 13). Keep this in mind as we will revisit this sentiment soon!

V. 14a

In response to this plea for pity, Jesus offers the following response...

Luke 17:14a

14 When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.”

Q. Why would the Lord issue such a command?

A. Once again, per Jewish Law only the priests could declare a person healed of leprosy. In other words, only they had the authority to declare a person “clean,” giving them the permission to re-enter and re-assimilate into society.

FYI – The latter portion of v. 14 is interesting...

V. 14b

Luke 17:14b (Emphasis Mine)

14 . . . And **as they went**, they were cleansed.

FYI – The most accurate translation of this would be, “In the going, they were cleansed.” The underlying verb tensing does not indicate that they were progressively healed over the course of their journey (i.e., a little at a time). Rather, there came a point in the midst of the trek when their healing occurred suddenly or instantaneously! This is significant in two ways...

NOTE 1 – Firstly, they trusted in the Lord and obeyed Him before seeing any tangible result. Remember, per the text, they were not healed before they went but “in the going.” We see herein that faith and obedience brought about divine result!

NOTE 2 – Secondly, can you imagine their shared experience during this journey. What would it have been like to suddenly look over and see another cleansed and whole? How would you feel looking down at your hands or feet, seeing them healed!

KEY 1 – Imagine the celebration and joyfulness this grouping of men must have felt in such a moment...

KEY 2 – However, this is the point in the story where things take a bit of a surprising and tragic twist...

VV. 15–18 PT. 1 (THE NINE)

Luke 17:15–18

15 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. 17 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?”

FYI – Before we address the grateful Samaritan, let us note the nine who failed to render thanksgiving...

NOTE 1 – Note that Jesus was dismayed at their ingratitude. Knowing that all of them were healed, how was it 90% of the group failed to return to offer some word of thanksgiving and appreciation for His life-changing work? The text offers no reason for their failing, but one insightful author offers the following explanation...

QUOTE – One of the lepers waited to see if the cure was real. Another waited to see if the healing would last. Still another decided he had never had leprosy in the first place while another said he would take the time to see Jesus later. One said he would have gotten better anyway while another said he was “already much improved.” Two claimed that any rabbi could have done this, and another gave the glory to the priests!

NOTE 2 – Ultimately, we do not know why the nine failed to return. Were they too preoccupied or distracted going back home and enjoying the benefit(s) of their new-found healing? What we do know is that Christ deemed their failure to return as a failure! Once again...

Luke 17:17

17 Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?”

VV. 15–18 PT. 2 (THE ONE)

Thus said, let us turn our attention to the one who took the time to offer thanksgiving...

Luke 17:15–18 (Emphasis Mine)

15 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. 17 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?”

FYI – There are several elements worthy of note herein...

NOTE 1 – Christ was in no way diminishing the race of the Samaritan (v. 18). Aren't you glad that Jesus is willing to accept and transform any who come to Him! Rather, He is identifying a pattern all-too-present during His earthly ministry. Though the Jews should have been the first to gladly receive Him, they were often hard-hearted and resistant. However, Jesus was often beloved by the foreigner, the outcast and those deemed socially unacceptable. Therefore, v. 18 is not a slight against the ethnicity of the Samaritan but against the behavior of His own people!

NOTE 2 – Moreover, notice how this man returns to Jesus (v. 15). The text says He came back praising God! The word herein literally means “to honor, extol and glorify.” Notice also that he does this in a loud voice! Whereas the ten called out to Jesus loudly (v. 13), only one praises the Lord in similar fashion! If only our thanksgiving were as loud as our clamoring request!

NOTE 3 – Continuing along, look at the early portions of v. 16. The text says He “threw himself” at the feet of Christ and offered thanksgiving. The Greek word used here is “eucharisteo” (from which we derive our word “Eucharist”). Whereas the nine never returned, this man felt compelled to thank the One who had been the means of His healing (i.e., in genuine humility)!

QUOTE 1 – “Instead of simply going to the priest, this one man became a priest—a priest who built his altar at the feet of Jesus.”

Q. Why did this one man return to give thanks? What compelled him so?

A. Perhaps the answer is found within the text itself. Consider the following...

Luke 17:15 (Emphasis Mine)

15 One of them, when he **saw** he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice.

KEY 1 – The term in the original language can mean “to see”—but it has a deeper connotation. By extension it means to “understand, perceive or recognize” (e.g., “I see what you mean” or “I see where you are coming from”). It can refer to a perception that transcends physical sight alone...

KEY 2 – All ten saw they were healed (i.e., in terms of what they could perceive with their own eyes). However, it seems that only one perceived what had taken place. Only one understood the magnitude of what had happened and the kindness of the One responsible for such a marvel. This insight catalyzed a spirit of humility, praise and thanksgiving unto the Christ who was worthy!

V. 19

Lastly, let us consider the final portion of this account...

Luke 17:19

19 Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

NOTE 1 – This account concludes with this departing blessing. The phrase “made you well” (NIV) or “made you whole” (KJV) comes from a Greek term commonly translated as “to save.” Thus, this might be translated as, “Rise and go; your faith has saved you.” This verbiage was often used by Jesus concerning people who had experienced something beyond physical healing. Thus...

NOTE 2 – The text hints that this Samaritan leper received more than the other nine. Whereas they received physical healing alone, this man received a deeper deliverance. His faith had prompted him to return to the feet of Jesus to offer thanks, and that personal contact and submission “signified a healing of the soul that was more than skin deep.” All ten were touched; only one was changed.

APPLICATION(S)

Throughout this study I have identified the primary elements of this selection. Thus, I have worked to help you digest this passage in a theological manner. However, good theology must have practical application, that we might be “doers of the Word” v. “hearers only” (James 1:22). Allow me to note the following in the way of application for Christian life and living...

KEY – Within this story we can identify three distinct groupings of people...

1) The TEN

Verse 12 indicates that ten lepers encountered Christ upon His entry into the village—ten whose lives were ruined by their leprosy! As we have covered at some length, every facet of their lives was marred beyond remedy by this wasting disease. However, these men knew enough to call upon the power of Christ to remedy what ailed them! Thus said...

We do well to see ourselves in the ten. Their physical condition symbolically pictures the spiritual condition of those outside of Christ. We deal with a “leprosy” all our own in human sinfulness. Sin has infected each of us with no earthly means of remedy (Rom. 3:23). It is a wasting disease of the soul that distorts and mars the image of God within us beyond recognition, causing us to live as outcasts—as those who are dead—in relation to the Lord (Eph. 2:1–3). Of course, Christ Jesus has made a way for both pardon and cleansing by grace through faith in Him (Eph. 2:1–10; John 3:16). To what degree do we know enough to call upon the power of Christ to remedy what ails us?

KEY – Let those outside of Christ call out to Him! He still has pity and saves, restoring and saving those in need.

2) The NINE

Moreover, we do well to see ourselves in the nine. Like them, how often does the Lord bless us in some way, and we fail to offer a corresponding word of thanksgiving? The sense of disgust we feel toward them for failing to return to Christ should be directed inwardly a bit, as we all-too-often follow in their very footsteps...

Q1. How often do we forget how terrible our affliction was?

Q2. How often are we too busy in life and living to offer thanks?

Q3. How often do give glory to the wrong party, person or power?

Q4. How often does He wonder, “Is there no one to give me thanks?”

KEY – It is our fallen nature to traffic in ingratitude. Like the nine, it is our default to overlook His goodness and neglect the appropriate response of humility and adoration. Sadly, we act like the nine more often than we care to admit! In this holiday season, are there blessings of God that have gone unrecognized? If so, let us do better than these nine and give God thanks. It is truly the least that we can do!

3) The ONE

Ultimately, let us mimic the behavior of this ONE good Samaritan...

NOTE 1 – It is appropriate to take the time to praise, celebrate, honor, extol and glory our God and Savior!

NOTE 2 – It is perfectly acceptable to “loudly” praise the Lord (i.e., adding some passion to your worship).

NOTE 3 – Take the time to run to the feet of Jesus and operate as a priest ministering before/unto Him.

NOTE 4 – Of course, this is all contingent upon truly “seeing, understanding and perceiving” rightly.

KEY – May this word stir you in this season of Thanksgiving to recognize and celebrate Him in kind (**PRAYER**).

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Those who wish to give online may do so at www.NewLifeBarre.org. Those who wish to give in person can utilize the offering boxes located throughout the church facility. Thank you for your faithfulness in supporting the work of Christ.

NOTE 2 – Ministry Schedule...

Prayer – Sunday at 8:45am

Sunday School – Sunday at 9:15am

CYC – Tuesday from 3–4pm and 4–5pm

Weekly Study – Thursday at 6:30–7:30pm

Women’s Ministry – 2nd Tuesday at 6:30pm

Men’s Breakfast – 2nd Saturday at 9am

Potluck – Final Sunday of the Month

NOTE 3 – Special thanks to those who participated in our work-day yesterday. God bless you all!

