

“Thanks, Mom”

Luke 17:11-19

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • May 12, 2019

A young couple decided to take the parenting class that was being offered at their church. So they explained to their four-year-old daughter that they were going to be learning how to be a better mommy and daddy. The next Sunday after church, the child was not getting her way and she became upset. Really upset. She began to throw a tantrum. Both parents tried to calm her down, but nothing was working. Finally, with tears streaming down her face, the little girl told her mother (very loudly), “You said you were learning how to be a better mommy. Well it’s not working!”

Some of you right now are remembering similar scenes with your own children. Or maybe with your *parents*, I don’t know. The truth is, being a mother is hard work! It’s not always the way you imagined it. Those of you with young children may remember what that was like. You have this ideal image of motherhood. You imagine yourself standing in the kitchen watching your children who are sitting at the kitchen table quietly humming Beethoven while absorbing their age-appropriate encyclopedia. They politely share the Crayons with each other and always put them back in the box when finished. All while you recreate the map of the United States using homemade sugar cookies. And you think, “ahhh, the joy of motherhood.”

The reality, though, is far different. Your little darlings scream “mine” at each other as they rip the coloring book apart. Most of the Crayons from that brand new box are broken or missing. The ones the dog didn’t eat are now ground into the carpet forever. In between loads of laundry you smell smoke and discover that the slice-and-bake cookies are burned. Frustrated, you finally collapse into a chair and fight back tears as you think back to the time when you thought you would do something worthwhile with your life, like being a brain surgeon by day and a lawyer for the poor at night.

It turns out that motherhood is often a thankless job, which is why we’ve developed Mother’s Day. The whole purpose of Mother’s Day is for us to stop and say thank you. Thank you for the long nights with us when we’re sick; thank you for the elaborate school projects which we sprung on you the night before they were due; thank you for meals and transportation and clothes.

Today is a day to say thank you to mothers so I thought it would be appropriate for us to look at this passage about being thankful. This story takes place somewhere along the border between Samaria and Galilee. The Samaritans were sort of a mixed race of Israelites from the old Northern Kingdom and Assyrians. As such, their religion was a mixture of Jewish and pagan religions and the Jews in Judea and Galilee despised them.

As Jesus is entering the town there is a group of people with leprosy outside the city gate. Lepers in those days were not permitted to live in the city. They had to stay outside. They were also required to keep their distance from anyone else. When other people would pass by the lepers had to stand far away, usually about 50 feet, and shout, “unclean, unclean.” They were social outcasts in every sense. So they would form their own colonies outside the city and position themselves near the main road in order to ask for charity. As is often the case, their common struggle transcends society’s divisions. Misery loves company, so when they’ve been thrown out of society, it no longer matters whether they are Jew or Samaritan.

As Jesus approaches these ten call out to him for help, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” It’s interesting that unlike other times when Jesus healed lepers, this time he doesn’t touch them. In fact, Luke says that Jesus simply shouts back, “Go show yourselves to the priests.” This reminds us that Jesus is, as the beginning of the gospel of John tells us, the Word of God. The way God works is by

speaking. He spoke the world into existence. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead by speaking. Through his written Word he still speaks. He speaks to you.

So Jesus says, "Go show yourselves to the priests." The priests were the ones who would determine if a person was healed of their disease and could be admitted back into the community. So they strike out to see the priests and the Bible says that as they went they were cleansed. You can imagine what that scene must have been like. Maybe one of them notices something different about his skin. He says, "hey fellas look. It's going away. I can't believe it. Look at my skin." And then they all notice the same thing. They've been cured. They can go home again. They can see their wives and their children again. They can go back to the synagogue again.

And then one of them says, "Hey, we should go back and say thank you." But for some reason, the other nine choose not to go back. Maybe they're scared that the disease will come back before the priest says they can come back into society. Or maybe now that they've been restored to society the rules about who's "in" and who's "out" are important to them again. But there's an even bigger reason here and it's a matter of the heart. So the first thing I want you to remember from this passage is that thankfulness, or gratitude, is a way of life.

In Matthew 12, Jesus says, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

What we see here is that the one who returned to give thanks for being healed did so because of what was in his heart. Likewise, the other nine didn't return because of the condition of their hearts. You and I don't have thankful hearts because we say thank you. Rather, we say thank you because we have

thankful hearts and the source of that thankfulness comes from recognizing what God has done for us. In and through Jesus we are cleansed from our sins and restored to fellowship with God.

In verse 19 Jesus tells the man, "your faith has made you well." This translation can be a little confusing. We certainly can't say that this man's faith cleansed him of the leprosy. All ten were cured but Jesus is not praising the other nine. The Greek here is literally translated, "your faith has saved you." The one man has something that the other nine do not. He now has faith. This passage, then, is a story of ten being physically healed but only one being saved. And so the second thing I want us to remember today is that thankfulness is the result of our faith. Because of our faith in Jesus Christ we are able to say thank you to one another but more importantly, we are able to say thank you to God.

Verse 15 says, "one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks." The third thing we see in this passage is that thankfulness to God leads us to worship. The man praised God with a loud voice. When you and I are truly thankful for what God has done for us, we break out in worship. We love to worship with the Body of Christ, the Church. Our lives become continuous worship and other people notice it. We don't have to shout at people to get their attention because our lives are praising God with a different kind of "loud voice."

Christian recording artist Steven Curtis Chapman captured this idea a number of years ago in a song called *Live Out Loud*. The lyrics of one of the verses go something like this: "If we really have been given the gift of eternal life and filled with living hope, we are going to overflow. There's just no way to keep it in."

And one of the ways that living hope overflows is in thankfulness. When we are filled with thankfulness for what God has done for us, we also become filled with thankfulness for what other people do for us and that leads us to

say thank you often. So this Mother's Day, tell mom thank you. And tell Dad thanks. Tell your kids thanks and your neighbor thanks. Be the kind of person that recognizes your blessings and thanks people for them. And tell God thanks. Show him you are thankful by the way you worship and the way you treat other people.

And then do it all over again tomorrow and the next day and the next. Don't wait another year to tell mom or anyone else thank you. Say it and show it often.

Amen.