

Thanksgiving  
“Thanksgiving...by the numbers”  
(Luke 17:11-13)  
November 22, 2023  
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our the traditional Gospel text for this day of National Thanksgiving is from – Luke 17:15-19

**“15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, 16 and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. 17 So Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? 18 Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” 19 And He said to him, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”**

So far the text...

What plans do you have for tomorrow, our nation’s national day of Thanksgiving? Enjoy eating a turkey with family and friends? How many people are coming? , Maybe we need a couple of turkeys? Numbers...numbers. Do you plan to watch a traditional football game? What’s the over/under for the number of touchdowns that Dak Prescott will throw? What are the odds of a particular team’s victory? Numbers...numbers. For many people, they will be flying somewhere for Thanksgiving. The number of people who will be screened by the TSA in the next 12 days is estimated to be 30 million, a new record! More Thanksgiving numbers.

The numbers from our Gospel reading tell a story – an accurate story of the souls of 10 men. God alone can see into a man’s heart, but we can see the evidence or lack of evidence of faith by a person’s actions.

Imagine the life of those ten lepers for a moment. They didn’t get to celebrate Thanksgiving meals with their families. They were not allowed to have any contact with anyone outside of themselves. They lived a miserable life with no hope of a cure. They spent their days watching each other waste away until they died one by one. They were frictionless with society. They were shunned by society...but not

by One who was traveling along the border of Samaria and Galilee. All-knowing Jesus knew of their desperate situation. And He chose to interact with them. He chose bring some friction to them. Mercy friction, that is.

In today's world, there is a generation called generation Z. It is comprised of teens and young adults up to the age of 26. This generation is becoming known as a frictionless generation. They choose to isolate themselves and not interact with others if it is at all possible. When travelling by Uber, generation Z can choose the quiet mode on their app as opposed to happy chat and travel in silence without having to talk with the Uber driver.

Technology enables us to avoid contact with people when we order take-out food or shop. Just leave it at the front door. And this carries over to the traditional Thanksgiving meal as well. Over 50% of Generation Zers plan to opt out of a Thanksgiving meal. Why? Because of friction conversation that might stray into politics and religion.

And the question for all of us is...can you truly love a person, care about a person, be thankful for a person if you can't bring yourself to eat with that person? Jesus was accused of eating with sinners and tax collectors. Why because He loved them! He loved to rub shoulders with the very people He came to save. God's mercy friction!

And Jesus didn't go around the lepers. He walked straight toward them and waited for their cry for mercy.

**“Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. 13 And they lifted up their voices and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”**

They knew they couldn't approach Jesus so they stood afar off and raised their voices in faith to Jesus their Master. We remember Peter's words as he used this title for Jesus in faith.

**“Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.” (Luke 5:5)**

**“Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” (Luke 9:33)**

And when the disciples were in the boat in the storm they cried out, **““Master, Master, we are perishing!” Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm.” (Luke 8:24)**

So Jesus told the 10 to go show themselves to the priests. And they went in an act of faith. And what happened? 10 were healed! Ten were free to go back into society as normal and be with their families again! What a gift from God!

And yet faith stopped one man from doing this just yet... a Samaritan man. For he had a greater priority. He had to do something that came over family and friends. He had to go back to the giver of this gift, to the One who he had trusted for help, who had changed his life and worship Him and give Him thanks. He was compelled to do so. His life was utter ruin a few minutes before and it was all because of Jesus.

One returned in faith. For the other nine, their faith was short lived. And the Master Jesus asked the rhetorical questions that could only expect a “yes” answer. **“Were there not ten cleansed? Yes. Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?”** Yes.

In between these two questions Jesus asks, **“But where are the nine?”** He means to say that the other nine should be right here right now alongside the Samaritan, giving thanks as well. But they weren't. They desired no more friction with Jesus now that they were free of leprosy. No friction of joyful worship of Him. No friction with God in giving Him glory. No friction of thanking Him...because sadly, there was no longer a connection of faith with Jesus.

But, Jesus tells the one who did return, these words.  
**“Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”**

You are well not only in body but also in soul. Your soul has been cleansed by My mercy and love and now go your way with saving faith.

God knows the numbers of all who ask for mercy. God knows the numbers of all who trust in Him and have thankful hearts. God knows all who have received the gift of saving faith and are numbered with the elect.

By the numbers, Romans 3:23 tells us **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”** All people are born sinful and incapable of saving oneself from this eternal disease. All men have been shunned by God from His presence.

But, God in His mercy approaches all men. How? The second part of Romans 3:23 tells us how. **“being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,”**

Freely, by grace Jesus paid for all mankind’s sins. That is what our epistle from 1 Timothy 2 comforts us with.

**“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.”**

Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles, you and me! Paul so plainly tells us that God **“wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”**

So He did what only God could do...give Himself as a ransom for all people. This is the Gospel that God loved the world so much that He became like one of us. He dwelt among us. Friction of love. He died on the cross – allowing the friction of mankind’s hate to kill Him to free us of all sin!

So that the Psalmist can also say in Psalm 67, our Thanksgiving Psalm for today:

**“That Your way may be known on earth,**

**Your salvation among all nations.**

**3 Let the peoples praise You, O God;**

**Let all the peoples praise You.**

**4 Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy!**

**For You shall judge the people righteously,**

**And govern the nations on earth.**

God’s way is the only way of salvation through His Son Jesus and that makes the believer in Jesus well in his or her soul! That makes you well in your soul awaiting

Jesus' coming when He will make you perfectly well in your body also... in a twinkling of an eye you will be changed. It's no wonder that the saints in heaven are around the throne of the Lamb singing these words that we heard on All Saints Day from Revelation 7.

**“Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom,  
Thanksgiving and honor and power and might,  
Be to our God forever and ever.  
Amen.”**

As we wait for our final glory, we praise and give thanks to Jesus here as one with faith, that He has extended His mercy to even me, a poor sinful being.

Amen.

**“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**