

HEAR MINISTRIES

Sermon for Sunday, **October 12th, 2025**

Text: Luke Ruth 1:1-19a; 2 Timothy 1:1-13; Luke 17:11-19

Recorded by: Tammy Springer

***Let us Pray:** Lord God, all truth comes from You. As we hear Your truth today, open our hearts and minds to receive it. Clear our minds of anything that is distracting and help us to focus on Your Word. Search our hearts for anything that is standing in the way of being humble and living for You. Renew, refresh and restore us through Your Word, and we will give You all the glory and praise. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Several years ago, I read a book called, “one thousand gifts” by Ann Voskamp. It is about experiencing God’s grace by being **faithful** to Him, **obedient** to His Word and **thankful** in all things. She challenged people to keep a list of 1,000 things for which we are thankful. I thought that sounded like a really good challenge so I got a notebook and began. After about 4 months, I had written 419 things in my notebook and I began to lose interest. Well, this past week I pulled out that book again. Since I wrote the list I could see there were a few more things I could add, but I realized in reading over it I was thinking in terms that were too general. I also noticed that, since I stopped recording things in my Thankful Journal, I haven’t been as joyful in my spirit. Interesting.

One of the things Ann emphasized is that “Joy is always obedience.” And only self can kill joy. I Thessalonians 5:18 says, “*Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.*” **Have you ever found that you feel much better when you have obeyed than when you haven’t? Or that you can be joyful one moment and then, depending on your thoughts, be totally joyless the next? By obeying Christ’s command to give thanks in all circumstances, trusting God and having faith that He is in control, we will see that being thankful brings us joy.**

I think God is trying to teach me something. In the past weeks, as I have studied the Scripture, two words keep standing out: **Faith and Obedience**. We saw it last week in Jesus' teachings to His disciples, using the mustard seed as an example. In today's readings we see these same words: **Faith and Obedience**, this time alongside of **Thankfulness**. All three are illustrated in two accounts with which we are all very familiar: Ruth and the thankful leper. **Both stories emphasize the significance of acknowledging God's blessings and responding with thanksgiving.**

In *Ruth chapter 1* we see that Ruth is **faithful** to God and to Naomi, her mother-in-law. She loyally sticks by Naomi, even though the future may look bleak. She **trusts** God to provide for them both as they enter a new land. And Naomi's return to Bethlehem signifies a spiritual and physical **journey of faith**, as she seeks the Lord and finds comfort in Him after the death of her husbands.

Ruth's heartfelt words in verse 16, (often sung at weddings) “**...for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God, my God**” demonstrate her **faithfulness** and **obedience** to God and to Naomi. It's a wonderful example for all of us. And, we know that by the end of the book of Ruth, **faithfulness** and **obedience** turn into **thankfulness** and **joy**!

Psalm 111 that was read this morning is another example of how **giving thanks to God fills us with joy!!** The psalmist begins with, “*I will thank the Lord with all my heart....*” And then goes on to name several things for which he is thankful. We can see that it uplifts him and brings joy to his heart. When I need to feel uplifted I usually read the Psalms because they point out God's goodness and trustworthiness. **Praise and thanksgiving brings joy!**

Then our readings go to *2 Timothy*, reminding us in verse 13 that even “*.....if we are faithless, He remains faithful.....*” **What an encouragement to each of us!!** In our humanness we oftentimes do not stay faithful to God, but He is there when we return because He is ALWAYS faithful to us.

This brings us to the ten lepers in *Luke 17:11-19*. You will notice that verse 11 begins with “*....on the way to Jerusalem, Jesus was passing along between Samaria and Galilee.*” These were Gentile regions; places that Jewish people

would not ordinarily go, because the Samaritans were despised by the Jewish people. **Why did the Jews despise the Samaritans, you ask?**

Samaria was a portion of land, originally inhabited by the Jews, that had been conquered several centuries before by a foreign enemy because of their idolatry. Many of the Jewish tribes that had lived there were carried off to foreign lands by the Assyrians. Other Jews that had stayed there intermarried with Assyrians in that area. This produced a mixed breed of people called **Samaritans, who claimed ancestry from the Israelites but practiced a mix of pagan rituals alongside of Jewish beliefs.** Recently, in our study of Ezra, the ladies group learned that it was Samaritans who caused a problem for the Jewish people in trying to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

Remember when Jesus asked the woman at the well for a drink and she was surprised, saying to Jesus, “*Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.*”(John 4:9) How about the story of the Good Samaritan? The Jewish people would not stop to help the injured man alongside of the road, but the Samaritan did. Isn’t that interesting? **So, what does Jesus encounter when He first enters the village?** Luke 17:2, “...He was met by ten lepers who stood at a distance....”

They had to stand a distance away because of the nature of their condition because it was very contagious. Bible historians tell us the leprosy we see in some lands today, dreadful as it is, is not quite the same as the kind of disease that plagued people in the Biblical times. It was apparently a flesh-eating disease that left people horribly sick and weak and needy. Because there was no cure for it, people who had it were driven away from populated areas and were not permitted to come near the towns or villages. So, they were completely at the mercy of others to leave them food or water or clothing or other necessities.

Now, **I wonder if maybe these ten people**, huddled together to support one another as best they could, **had heard of what Jesus could do?** Some Bible scholars suggest these 10 men believed the Scriptures taught that one of the signs of the Messiah would be that He would heal people of their diseases, including leprosy.

In Luke 17:13 we read, “....and [they] lifted up their voices, saying, ‘Jesus,

Master, have mercy on us....” They were **asking** Jesus to heal them! Just like the man in *Luke chapter 18:41*, who said, *“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”* And Jesus asked him, *“What do you want me to do for you?”* Now, Jesus **knew** what the man wanted, but He made the man walk up to Him and **ask**, *“Lord, that I may receive my sight.”*

An essential preparation for us to be faithful, obedient and thankful is our asking. Jesus did say in *Matthew 7:7-8*, *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you....* We need to **ask** and then pay careful attention to the answer....even to **the way He answers....**so that we can give the thanks to our Lord that is due Him.

Isn’t it interesting that Jesus doesn’t heal them right then and there? He tells them, *“Go and show yourselves to the priests.”* The reason for this command is that the **Scriptures in Leviticus 13 and 14** (the Old Testament which they would have had at this time) **give very specific instructions of what someone is to do in cases of leprosy and Jesus knew this.** It said if they were healed, they were to go show themselves to the priests, who at that time functioned almost in the role of “health inspector” (they held a lot of roles at that time!). **Leviticus lays out exactly what to do in the case of a healing from leprosy and how the priests were to be involved in the official declaration of that cleansing.**

All ten lepers **must have** had **faith** in Jesus’ ability to heal them! They were **obedient** and went right to the priests. Imagine their amazement and joy when, on the way, they began **realizing** their skin was clear, the wounds were gone and their strength was restored!! What **joy** and dancing and rejoicing!!!

So, they were all healed. But **one of them**, Luke tells us, *“.. when he saw that he was healed, turned back praising God with a loud voice; he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving Him thanks.”* **And then Luke specifically writes, “Now he was a Samaritan.”** He makes a special point of it.

This man was a despised foreigner – a Samaritan. I wonder if we are told about him in this way because the other nine were **not** Samaritans? The other nine may have been Jewish men – the people who should most have welcomed Jesus as their Messiah. Perhaps they knew Jewish Law that

required them to be declared healed (or *cleansed*) by the priests but that was all the Law required.

Jesus says, ‘Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’ **Perhaps the Samaritan felt the most thankful because, among the ten, he felt he was the most unworthy?** He went beyond Jewish Law because he was so grateful that He couldn’t hold back his thankfulness and joy!!

Jesus recognized that this man deliberately came back to thank Him. And He said to him, “*Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.*” **Now, what do you think that man did when he went on his way?** I have a feeling he was dancing and leaping and praising God!!! **Do you think he kept his mouth shut about it? Probably not!!** He told everyone he could find about what the Lord Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, had done for him!!!

What have you discovered about thankfulness through this account of Jesus and the lepers? The lepers discovered that to be healed they had to first **ask**! When we **ask**, we need to pay attention and actually **take note of His answer to our request**. This thankful leper got exactly what he asked for, but for some of us, the answer may come in a different form than we are expecting. Then, we take the example of the 10th leper and we **return to God to give Him thanks!** Finally, we can **share with others** the wonderful ways God blesses us and answers our prayers!!

What I learned from trying to record 1,000 things for which to be thankful, is that there are so many other blessings God gives us besides the big ones we all name, like food, clothing, shelter, etc. There are the little glimpses of Himself He shows us in a butterfly on a flower or a beautiful sunrise/sunset, or cows peacefully grazing in the pasture. There is joy and blessing in a job well done and in creating a beautiful quilt or making a meal for someone. Literally, there ARE 1,000 things for which we can be thankful!!

I think I will need to get back to my Thankful Journal so that I can begin to experience again the joy that comes from seeing all the blessings God

provides for us. Maybe you, too, want to keep a Thankful Journal. One caution: don't expect to get to 1,000 things in one sitting. It's been years and I'm not done yet!

God is so faithful to us, even when we are not faithful to Him. The biggest thing we can thank Him for is the gift of our salvation through Jesus Christ our Savior. It only takes a few seconds to say *"Thank You, Lord, for saving my soul."*

Amen.