

## The Duty of Praise

Luke 17:11-19 (ESV)

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray:

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

There are many stories of Jesus' healings and miracles found throughout the four Gospel accounts. Our Gospel reading for today is unique though. While all those stories focus especially on how the needy come to Jesus and on how he heals their infirmities, this one is marked by the reaction of the healed. The reaction is important to the story because there's two different reactions from people in the same exact situation: one with gratitude and one with indifference. Yet, this miracle of Jesus concerns more than the Samaritan's gratitude compared to the nine indifference. While the gratitude and thanksgiving of the Samaritan put a crown of rejoicing on his praise of God, all the previous actions of the lepers also gave God praise. The act of first coming towards Jesus and praying to him gave God praise. The act of obeying his command gave God praise. This whole story of the lepers, alongside showing the power and benevolence of Jesus, gives you an example of how to give God praise by praying, receiving, and showing thanksgiving.

One way to praise God is to seek good from him. The ten lepers sought good from Jesus by asking for mercy. Their need was very basic: they had leprosy. They were a secluded people, these lepers. They could not participate in normal society; they could not come into any contact with the non-leprous. Their need was healing, a return to life before this terrible disease. They approached Jesus with some shouting. **“And as Jesus entered the village, he was met by ten lepers who stood at a distance, and lifted up their voices, saying, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.’”** They sought good from Jesus, they sought healing. Somehow these lepers had heard of Jesus the Master. They had heard of Jesus' mercy and compassion. This man would heal people, whether he touched them or he called out to them. This man did not judge by sight or appearance, but he welcomed any who drew near to him. Yet, these lepers could only stand from afar. They knew this Jesus was compassionate, but they didn't want to scare him off. It was proper etiquette to warn anyone who came close to a leper to warn them by saying, “Unclean! Unclean!” Just to be on the safe side, these leprous men stood far off, crying out for the Lord Jesus to hear them. Whether out of fear or out of respect, these lepers were not very bold with our Lord. They didn't make any stipulations on Jesus. They didn't ask him to heal them now. They didn't ask him how to heal them

from leprosy. They put everything into his hands. All they did was to ask for mercy. They let Jesus decide what was the best way to fulfill their request.

These lepers serve as a great example, dear Christians, on how you give God the praise by seeking good from him. This is not something foreign to you. From the very beginning you have sought good from Jesus. Yet, it is good to have a reminder and a model with this example of the ten lepers. Just as the lepers cried out to the Lord for mercy, so should you. You seek the Lord Jesus for both provisions and for redemption. You seek from the Lord Jesus everything you need to support your body and life. You ask him to provide and protect your clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all that you have. You know that he upholds everything by the word of his power, and nothing is outside of his control. So, you are not afraid to approach him for what you need.

You also seek from him things greater than temporal items, items which will come and go. Yes, you seek from him eternal items, the salvation of your soul. You cry out to the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. You recognize that this is the true mercy which Jesus wants to give: the peace of the Lord. Yet, you are not the same as these lepers who called out from afar. You don't have the same timidity, unsure how the Lord will react to your request. You have the boldness and confidence to approach him face to face. You know each and every request will be heard. He is not afraid of touching an unclean person, even if you did have leprosy. To be honest, your sickness and disease was much more ghastly than leprosy. Yet, Jesus has, does, and will continue to welcome you. He loves and cherishes your requests, your cries for mercy.

The lepers not only gave God the praise by seeking good from him but they also gave him the praise by receiving Jesus' word. When they cried for mercy, these lepers expected Jesus to say or do something. Jesus answered their request with, "**Go and show yourselves to the priests.**" That is all our Lord gave them: a command to act according to Moses' instructions, a command to prove their cleanliness to the priests. This was certainly not what the lepers expected. They might have thought Jesus was going to pronounce them clean, or he would go and touch them to take away the leprosy. They probably expected some proof that he would give them what they wanted. Yet, the lepers received nothing of that sort. Instead, these lepers received a command for something they had probably done countless times before. Each time before, these lepers had presented themselves to the priests to no help. Each time they had been rejected as unclean. This did not deter these ten lepers. It says, "**And as they went they were cleansed.**" These lepers took Jesus' words and treasured them. They followed his command. They did not question its meekness or simplicity. They understood that Jesus had the power to fulfill what these lepers wanted, even if our Lord did not confirm his promise with any grand signs or wonders. These words, "Go show yourself to the priests", was enough for them.

This might be a harder thing to follow than coming to the Lord Jesus with petitions. Receiving his commands humbly requires patience and fortitude. Yet, you are

called to do it. That's part of listening to an Almighty God; it's to wait and be patient. You know Jesus is sincere in his promises. You know he cares for your body and soul. Yet, he doesn't answer every petition of yours immediately or to your expectation. That is why it is good to refrain from putting specific times and locations for God to fulfill your prayers. When you ask for healing, or for provisions, or for deliverance from evil, you don't say, "Please give this to me *today*." You know the Lord Jesus is the Lord of mercy. He knows what is best for you in its due season. Place it into his hands, but do not limit him with things you cannot be certain about. He just might be working to strengthen your faith, or to strengthen your ability to draw near to him.

Lastly, you can give God the praise by returning to him with thanksgiving. We are about to hit the tragedy of this story. Ten lepers turned to the Lord Jesus for help. Ten knew him to be merciful. Ten knew he would help. Ten obeyed his simple command, even if it didn't seem to be much. Ten listened to him. Ten received his word. Yet, only *one* turned back and worshiped him. It says, **"Then 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. Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, 'Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?'"** Only one returned to give God the praise. And of all the lepers, it was the Samaritan; the one outside the covenant promises. Only the Samaritan worshiped Jesus by falling down at his feet. Only the Samaritan shouted out loud for joy that the Lord should look upon him favorably. Only the Samaritan produced the fruit of faith he initially confessed by turning to Jesus' mercy. Only he came back and publicly pronounced praise and thanksgiving.

This shows a stark difference between the Samaritan and the nine other lepers. How difficult it can be to maintain one's faith in time of plenty! It was easier for the lepers to show faith and trust in Jesus when they had leprosy, when they had a great need. Now that they were healed, it was easy for them to forget Jesus. As crazy as this might seem, considering they saw this miracle happen right before their eyes, the lepers' forgetfulness should not be surprising. Experience teaches us this. We often see sincere and well-meaning Christians become distracted with the cares and concerns of this life, forgetting to thank and praise the Lord who provided for them.

Something else to note about the Samaritan's thanksgiving; it was grand and obvious. Our Lord commends and welcomes this display of affection. Who knows, maybe the nine lepers had thanked God secretly in their heart for the healing. Yet, it wasn't enough compared to the large gesture the Samaritan made. The Samaritan made it very plain: this Jesus was the God who helped me and to him alone belongs my praise. He came shouting with a loud voice for all to hear. He came and showed the form of a servant, bowing down and reverencing his Lord and Master. Especially in this holiday season, when sentimentalities and thankfulness abound but always alongside a vagueness concerning to whom exactly it belongs, it is your duty to be explicit and

specific for your praise towards Jesus. To him belongs all the glory. To him belongs all the praise. His is the name above every name. His is the love and mercy to heal and to save.

It might be easy to focus on the Samaritan as a good example only because of his thanksgiving. It is “Thanksgiving Day” after all. Yet, you should not lose sight of this whole story; all the different ways you are called to give God the praise. It begins with recognizing who Jesus is and how you should approach him. The answer: often! Our Lord does not tire of hearing your requests and petitions. It continues when you receive his word, his promises, his answers to your prayers. Even if it is not what you expected, it is for your benefit. You will give Jesus the praise when you humbly receive it. When this petitioning is paired with receiving, followed by a clear and loud thanksgiving, then there ascends before God’s throne a beautiful, harmonious chorale of praise; one which God certainly adores. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.