

Thanksgiving...

Consider the account of Jesus healing men who had leprosy. Jesus healed all 10, the gospel story tells us. Luke 17:11-19 reports that Jesus commanded all 10 to go show themselves to the priest. In the very act of obedience, before the task was even completed, they were healed.

One single man, observing that his illness had disappeared, turned back and praised God in a loud voice and then prostrated himself before Jesus in deep **thankfulness**.

Jesus noted that this 10th leper was *the only foreigner* in the group. Certainly the other nine also noticed that their diseased skin was healed, but they failed to see that praise belonged to God and that **thanks** belonged to Jesus because of it.

The extent to which we praise and give **thanks** to God is in direct proportion to our ability to recognize God's gracious actions toward us. *Our thankfulness is an indicator of our faith.*

And, like those other nine lepers, we take a lot for granted. The Samaritan **foreigner** had spent his whole life on the fringes of Jewish society. Being marginalized and ostracized was nothing new to him. Leprosy was just one more thing that set him apart. For the Jewish lepers, there was a greater sense of entitlement. Instead of **thankfulness**, they would rather engage in some intentional forgetfulness of the whole leprosy thing.

Do we feel entitled as Christians? Like God owes us something? The preceding verses of this 17th chapter remind us that we are only doing our duty when we worship God, read the Bible, pray, and tell others about the love of Jesus.

What have we forgotten? Our sinfulness? The time when we were the ones on the outside looking in? The fact is that each of us, all of us, are **foreigners**. We are strangers in a strange land.

Our funeral liturgy gets the point across quite well. At the end of every funeral service, at the time of the commendation, the deceased is commended to God with the words, "acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, a lamb of your own flock, a sheep of your own fold, a sinner of your own redeeming."

We are all **foreigners**, and yet there are no **foreigners** here. We are, each of us, sinner of Christ's own redeeming. Or as Luther stated it at the end of his life, "We are beggars, this is true."

We are ones who have been bought with a price. This **Thanksgiving** holiday let's not just *say* we are **thankful**, but *show* that we are **thankful**. Too often, we find ourselves less than **thankful**. The church has a lot of resources and practices that veterans in the faith tend to take for granted.

Like what?

--We often assume there will always be a church to come to

when it is convenient for us, without fully committing our time and resources to supporting that ministry.

--We often have multiple copies of the Bible in our homes, and the ability to read. Yet we do not take the time to read it.

That is why I am so excited about the opportunity to listen to the New Testament on MP3 or CD. It is why we need to hold each other accountable. I hope you will join in this effort.

--We have some other practices, too, that demonstrate our **thankfulness** and deepen our relationship with God. Among them are worship and fellowship and service opportunities. But there's always a danger that whenever we are regularly around holy things, they start to become simply part of the routine of the church.

And in those moments we need to be reminded that we are simply to do what this 10th leper did. We return each week to Jesus. We gather around his Word and Sacrament, and what cost Jesus his life can never be *routine* for us. We return to the presence of Jesus and we humble ourselves. We worship him. We give **thanks** for his death and resurrection, and we share that good news with others.

Thanks be to God! Peace be with you,

Pastor Chris