

*<sup>11</sup>On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup>As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, <sup>13</sup>they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" <sup>14</sup>When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. <sup>15</sup>Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. <sup>16</sup>He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup>Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? <sup>18</sup>Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" <sup>19</sup>Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."*

Every Saturday morning a most miraculous thing happens in my house. While I am at work leading the men's Bible Study, meeting with the executive committee, writing prayers, visiting with people in my office or in the hospital, at home things have been happening. When I arrive home around noon I see the marks of the vacuum on the carpets, the sparkle of the mirror in the bathroom, and the aroma of pledge lingering on the wood surfaces. But this miracle of a clean home has become so commonplace that I give it no thought. It's just the way things are. I am glad Sue does not hold it against me when I don't say thanks.

I wonder if Jesus does? In the story from Luke we just heard Jesus noticed when nine did not return to give thanks. One leper, a Samaritan who was healed came back praising God and thanked Jesus. And Jesus said, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found the return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"

Jesus notices when he is thanked, when God is praised.

The prayer for safe travel that was offered to God – Jesus notices when there is no thanksgiving accompanying safe arrival.

The prayer for help getting through a tough day – Jesus notices when not even a thought is given to God when all has gone well.

The pleading for forgiveness and a new start – Jesus notices when there is no gratitude for the forgiveness God gives.

Jesus notices – but does Jesus keep track? Those nine who did not return and give thanks – were they punished for it in this life? – in the life to come will they be held accountable for praise and thanks they never offered?

Will you? Will I?

One time Jesus taught about our Father in heaven – Jesus said that God makes God’s sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. In this life God plays no favorites. In this teaching Jesus was making the point that we should pray for our enemies and bless those who persecute us because then we would be like God who plays no favorites in this life but pours out God’s good blessings on all.

Did God zap the nine ungrateful ones? No. Their healing was a gift that God would no more take back than Sue would mess up the house because I fail to thank her for cleaning. I am sure the nine were not punished in this life for their ingratitude.

And the life to come? Is God keeping a ledger with every thought and word and deed – waiting to pay us off with exactly what we deserve? Here is what Paul wrote: While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved from the wrath of God.

Does God have a right to be upset with us when we are ungrateful? You bet. But for Jesus sake God forgives. God knows our failings, but for Jesus’ sake, God sets them aside.

So what did we learn here today? I guess that it really doesn’t matter whether we say thanks or not. God will not treat us badly in this life if we are ungrateful –nor will God fail to forgive us in the life to come.

Now that would be the end of this sermon except for one more thing Jesus said. For after Jesus said, “Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” Jesus said to that Samaritan, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

Your faith has made you well. Now surely Jesus is not talking about the healing – all ten received that. But this one who returned praising God and thanking Jesus was made well in a way the others were not.

The word for well here is a word meaning whole, - it is the word for salvation. Your faith has saved you might be another translation.

What had this man done? He had acknowledged the giver of his healing. – God the Father – Jesus. Praising God, thanking Jesus. And in that what wholeness, salvation.

What happens when I stop being concerned about me and myself and my world long enough to give thanks to God, or to Sue, or to you? That simple act changes our relationship. When I acknowledge what I have received I am changed. It is no longer “I the captain of my fate” but I receiver, dependent one” Now that is the truth about me – I am a dependent one – not independent. I need God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit. I need Sue. I need each of you. And when I know that and express that there is a wholeness and a wellness and a salvation that happens to me. Again and again it happens to me as I am grateful. Saying thanks is not a way to get something extra nor a way to keep from losing what you have, but it changes you – puts you in right relationship.

Being in right relationship with God and with others is what God most wants for you.