

Holy Gratitude: Experiencing True Transformation

"The miracle of a changed heart that lives a lifestyle of gratitude and thanksgiving to God for what He has done is a miracle that will last forever in eternity!"

When Jesus walked upon the earth, multitudes of people were touched by His life and ministry. His name became a household word because of the reputation of His miraculous deeds. Everyone was clamoring to be in His meetings because miracles and healings were happening everywhere He went.

Like everyone else, they had heard the stories about Jesus. They had heard of the miracles that followed Him everywhere He went, and they had heard about other lepers that had been cleansed by His touch. They had no other hope for a cure as there was no medicine that could help their terrible plight. They knew if they had any chance at all of having a future, it would only come through an encounter with Jesus.

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem and was passing through a village in the regions of Samaria and Galilee. The 10 lepers heard He was coming. What pressure they must have felt. Here was a potential source of healing, but could it happen for them? Or would it happen for them? Was this going to be a great testimony of victory and healing, or would their hopes be dashed in cruel disappointment?

But these 10 men began to yell out to Jesus, desperately crying, "Jesus! Master! Have mercy on us!" When Jesus heard their cries and saw their desperate condition, He called out to them and told them to "go show yourselves to the priests" as required in the Old Testament law. They believed and obeyed. The Bible says, "And as they went, they were cleansed" (Luke 17:14).

Can you imagine what that must have been like for these men when suddenly they began to feel the power of God surging through their bodies and saw new tissue and skin beginning to cover the horrible leprous sores that had covered them? They watched in amazement as their bodies began to be healed and saw the bodies of their nine friends be healed as well! Their lives were being saved. Their families and futures were being restored. Their death sentence from the horrible disease of leprosy was being reversed. Everything in their lives had now changed because of the miracle Jesus had just given them! Or had it?

In verse 15, the Bible says that one of them, a Samaritan, when he saw that he had been healed, returned back to Jesus and “with a loud voice glorifying God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks.”

Only one of the 10 who had received a life-saving miracle returned to give thanksgiving to the One who had just saved his life! Jesus received the praise and gratitude of this man but then asked the questions, “‘Were not the ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Were there not any found to return and give glory to God except this foreigner?’ Then He said to him, ‘Rise, go your way. Your faith has made you well’” (Luke 17:17-19).

This was a remarkable miracle, but it is also a story that unfortunately reveals a very common characteristic found in human nature. It is the lack of gratitude for the blessings of God. Many people may be passionate in their desire to reach out to Jesus in order to receive a miracle when they are in some kind of trouble. They will make all kinds of petitions and offer God all kinds of deals if He will agree to give them what they want. Yet the content of their hearts is much like the attitude that Jesus found in these lepers. They might cry out for mercy in their appeal for God’s help, even as the lepers who referred to Jesus as “Master.” But once the kindness of God has been demonstrated and their need has been

met, they simply go on their way as though they owe nothing back to Him in return. This is exactly what happened in the hearts of nine of the 10 lepers.

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One of the men was different. He was a Samaritan. When he realized that the leprosy sores that had covered his body and were taking his life were disappearing before his eyes, he returned back to Jesus and, "with a loud voice glorifying God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks" (Luke 17:15-16). He had called Him "Master" before he received his miracle, but he returned to worship and glorify Jesus with thanksgiving as his "Master" after he received it as well. Many people will call Jesus "Master" when they need something, but how many will continue to treat Him as "Master" by their worship and thanksgiving and surrender after they get what they needed?

There were 10 lepers who were touched by the power of God and saw their leprosy healed. But I believe that only one leper was really changed! This was the Samaritan who returned to give thanks by glorifying God in surrender to Jesus as his true "Master." Of this man Jesus said, "Your faith has made you well."

Thanksgiving in our hearts is as powerful a transforming force as the touch of God that heals leprosy. A transformed heart that has truly been changed because of the touch of God is a greater miracle than a healed body. There were many people in Jesus' day that saw and experienced for themselves the power of His miraculous touch yet their hearts were never changed! We can see this truth again and again throughout the Gospels. The greatest meetings Jesus ever had were in the cities of Bethsaida, Capernaum and Chorazin (Matt. 11). These three cities had come out to the wilderness where Jesus had gone to rest because they were hungry for His power and touch. Jesus was moved with compassion saying that they were like

sheep without a shepherd. He taught them, healed them of all their diseases and supernaturally fed them with a boy's lunch of two fish and five loaves. Thousands ate until they could eat no more.

Yet, it was the same people that are referenced in Matthew 11:20 where we read, "Then He began to reprimand the cities where most of His mighty works were done, because they did not repent." Jesus went on to give a stinging indictment of them all, saying that if Sodom and Gomorrah had experienced what these people experienced, they would have repented and judgment would have been withheld! In reality as difficult as it may seem, many, if not most, of the people who were the recipients of Jesus' greatest miracles may very well be in hell today! How could such a thing be? It's simple. A miracle of healing will produce a physical change that will last only for a lifetime. The miracle of a changed heart that lives a lifestyle of gratitude and thanksgiving to God for what He has done is a miracle that will last forever in eternity! Ten lepers were touched and blessed, but apparently only one was transformed by the great power of thanksgiving that was in his heart.

In this season we call Thanksgiving, may the power of God flow through us all in a new and fresh way that will produce a holy gratitude in our hearts that will bring forth a transformation in our lives! May we live in a state of continual thanksgiving to Jesus for all that He has done in our lives. May we never just seek His touch in our time of need and then go merrily on our way without taking the time to return and love and worship Him and give Him our best in return! When we come to Jesus like the leper, to thank Him and worship Him and to give back to Him out of the gratitude of our hearts, it is then that we will discover the true treasures of the kingdom of God in our lives. Thanksgiving lived out every day truly makes Jesus the Master in our lives. {eoa}

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