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Open Hands

A Thanksgiving Message: Which One Are You?

TEXT Luke 17:11–19

ASK If Jesus never gave you another earthly blessing, would you still love Him simply because He's God?

Jesus didn't come just to do something FOR us. He came to do something IN us, and then THROUGH us. The greatest gift He offers isn't something He can put in our hands. It's Himself.

1 Don't Treat What Is Holy as Common

Don't ever become so familiar with the things of God that you lose your reverence for the God who gave them to you. When we begin to treat the things of God as ordinary, we lose sight of the power and the promise those things were meant to produce in our lives. For some of us, it's time to come home: time to rekindle the fire in our spirit, get serious about the things of God again, and get busy doing what God has called us to do. Faith was never meant to be passive. We can't treat the promises of God's Word as though it's God's responsibility to do everything while we sit around producing no fruit. God has called us to be hearers AND doers of His Word. Sometimes the greatest thing you can do is stop looking at what God hasn't done yet and start being faithful with what He's already placed in your hands.

Hebrews 12:28, ESV Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.

James 1:22, ESV But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

REMEMBER

Don't just believe the Word. Live the Word.

2 Don't Let the Extraordinary Become Ordinary

We have so much to be thankful for. If God never did another thing for us, He's already done more than we could ever deserve. But sometimes we become so familiar with the blessings of God that we stop recognizing them as blessings. What we once prayed for, we now take for granted. What we once thanked God for, we now treat as ordinary. What once brought us to our knees in thanksgiving barely gets a second thought. In Luke 17, ten men experienced the miracle. All ten cried out for mercy, all ten obeyed the command of Jesus, and all ten were cleansed as they went. But only one turned around. All ten received the blessing, but only one returned to acknowledge the Blesser.

Luke 17:17–18, ESV

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?"

REMEMBER

A thankful heart doesn't just remember what God has done. A thankful heart recognizes the One who did it. Don't become so familiar with the goodness of God that you forget to be grateful for the God who has been good to you.

3 They Needed Something Only Jesus Could Give

Luke 17:11–14. These ten men were lepers: isolated from their communities, separated from the people they loved, identified by their condition. They weren't simply suffering physically; their entire lives had been affected. Then Jesus came, and they cried out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." They weren't asking Jesus to feel sorry for them. They were asking Him to do something they could not do for themselves. They couldn't heal themselves or change their condition. They needed a miracle. And when Jesus told them to go show themselves to the priests, they went! They obeyed before they saw the healing, walking while they still had the condition, and as they went they were cleansed. We don't have to make ourselves worthy before we can cry out to Him. But there's a difference between wanting Jesus to change your circumstances and wanting Jesus to change your life. We can want His healing without wanting His holiness, His provision without His lordship, His blessings without surrender.

Luke 17:12–13, ESV	And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."
Luke 17:14, ESV	When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed.
Romans 5:8, ESV	But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

REMEMBER

God didn't wait for us to get good to save us. He came to save us because He is good, and we are not. We want God to fix what we want, but we don't always want God to change what we want.

4 Ten Received the Miracle. One Returned to Jesus.

Luke 17:15–19. All ten were cleansed, but one man did something different. He saw that he was healed. He turned around. He glorified God with a loud voice. He fell at the feet of Jesus and gave thanks. All ten experienced His power, but only one returned to honor the One who had given it. Then Jesus asked, "Where are the nine?" The tenth man wasn't asking for another miracle or another blessing. He returned to glorify God and give thanks. And there's something deeper here. All ten had already been physically cleansed, but Jesus now personally affirmed this man's faith. The Greek word translated "made you well" can also mean "saved." While it can refer to physical healing, it invites us to consider something greater.

Luke 17:15–16, ESV

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.

Luke 17:19, ESV

And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

REMEMBER

The greatest thing Jesus offers isn't just relief from suffering. It's reconciliation with God.

5 The Secret to Serving Without Becoming Bitter

Isn't that something we experience in life, especially when we're serving people? You help someone, sacrifice your time, give of your resources and go out of your way because you genuinely care, and sometimes the people you've helped never come back to say thank you. Some even begin to take your kindness for granted. If we're not careful, we can become bitter and say, "I'm done. I'm not helping anybody else!" But think about Jesus. He healed all ten men, only one returned to thank Him, and He still showed mercy to all ten. Don't let somebody else's lack of appreciation rob you of your willingness to show compassion. Keep loving people, keep serving, keep showing mercy, keep doing good even when nobody notices. The secret: do it as unto the Lord, not merely unto people. When you serve for people's approval, you'll eventually be disappointed. When you serve unto the Lord, your reward isn't dependent on somebody else's gratitude. People may forget, take your kindness for granted or never acknowledge your sacrifice, but God does not forget. His reward may not come in the way or at the time we expect, but our labor in Him is never wasted. And if we know how much it means when somebody appreciates what we've done for them, how much more should we return to Jesus and thank Him for what He has done for us?

Colossians 3:23–24, ESV

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Hebrews 6:10, ESV

For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.

REMEMBER

God sees what others overlook. Don't let the nine who never thanked you stop you from loving the next ten.

6 Do We Love Jesus for What He Gives, or for Who He Is?

John 6:26–69. Jesus multiplied five loaves and two fish, thousands ate, and everyone was satisfied. The next day the crowd came looking for Him again, but Jesus knew why many of them had returned: they wanted more bread. They wanted physical bread; Jesus offered the Bread of Life. They wanted temporary satisfaction; Jesus offered eternal life. But when His teaching became difficult, many turned away. They had followed Him and listened to His teaching, but when following Jesus required something more, they walked away. Jesus turned to the Twelve, and Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" So here's the question: do we still want Jesus when following Him costs us something? When His Word confronts our sin? When following Him requires sacrifice? When He doesn't answer our prayers the way we wanted? Or have we become so focused on what He can give us that we've forgotten who He is?

John 6:26, ESV	Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves."
John 6:35, ESV	Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."
John 6:66, ESV	After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.
John 6:67–68, ESV	So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

REMEMBER

There's a difference between being attracted to the benefits of Christianity and being surrendered to Christ.

7 Sometimes Love Just Wants to Be With Jesus

John 12:1–3. We remember Lazarus because Jesus raised him from the dead. But look at the picture John gives us after that miracle. Jesus returns to Bethany and a dinner is prepared. Martha is serving, Mary anoints Jesus' feet, and Lazarus is reclining at the table with Him. The man who had been dead is now sitting at the table with the One who raised him, and Scripture doesn't record Lazarus asking for anything. He's simply there with Jesus. Sometimes love doesn't come asking for something; love just wants to be with someone. When was the last time we came into His presence without a list of things we needed? Opened our Bible simply because we wanted to know Him better? Worshiped Him, not because everything was going right, but because He is worthy? That's what the tenth leper understood. He had received his miracle and could have continued on his way, but something in his heart drew him back to Jesus.

John 12:2–3, ESV

> So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

REMEMBER

Do we love Jesus only for what He can do for us, or have we learned to love Him for who He is?

8 Open Hands: The One Who Came Back

This morning we acted out Luke 17. Ten men cried out for mercy, Jesus sent them to the priests, and as they went each one received his miracle (we used a dollar bill to picture it, not because healing can be bought or grace has a price, but to make the gift something you could see). Nine kept walking. One stopped, looked at what was in his hand, turned around and came back. He held the gift out as if to give it back, but Jesus let him keep it. He didn't come back to return the miracle or to ask for another one. He knelt at Jesus' feet and gave Him something far more personal: his gratitude, his worship, his faith, his heart. God isn't after your money. God is after your heart, and when God has your heart, everything else comes under His lordship, including your money. The miracle was an act of mercy; the thanksgiving was a response of faith. He didn't have to surrender the blessing to surrender his heart. Now look at open hands. This is how so many of us come to Jesus: "Lord, heal me. Provide for me. Fix my marriage. Help my children. Take this burden away." There's nothing wrong with those prayers; He healed all ten. But we come with our hands open because we want Him to put something in them, and once we get what we came for, we walk away, just like the nine. Have we spent so much time asking Jesus to fill our hands that we've never allowed Him to change our hearts? Jesus didn't come just to do something FOR us. He came to do something IN us (to forgive our sins, give us new life and transform our hearts) and then THROUGH us (to love others, serve others and carry His message into a world that desperately needs Him). The goodness of God should lead us back to the God who is good. We don't earn His grace; we receive it, and that grace transforms us.

Romans 2:4, ESV	Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?
Ephesians 2:8–10, ESV	For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
Mark 8:36, ESV	For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

REMEMBER

Maybe this Thanksgiving, instead of only coming to Jesus with our hands open to receive, we need to come to Him with our lives open to surrender. The greatest gift He ever offered us wasn't something He could put in our hands. It was Himself.

The Response

Don't miss the Savior. Ten came to Jesus wanting something. Nine got what they asked for and kept walking. One came back. Which one are you?

- ✓ If you've been coming to Jesus because you need something, that's okay. He invites you to come. Just don't stop there. Don't settle for a miracle and miss the Savior.
- ✓ Don't be so focused on what Jesus can put into your hands that you miss what He wants to do in your heart, or receive His blessings while ignoring His invitation to repentance and faith.
- ✓ If you've never surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, turn to Him today in repentance and faith.
- ✓ If you've been following Jesus for years, return to His feet with a grateful heart, not asking for something else, simply thanking Him for who He is.
- ✓ Ask yourself honestly: if Jesus never gave me another earthly blessing, would I still love Him simply because He's God? Would the cross be enough? Would His forgiveness be enough? Would knowing Him be enough?

The greatest reason we have to be thankful isn't merely what Jesus has given us. It's that Jesus has given us Himself.

Which one are you?