

Sermon for Nov 22, 2020, “The Samaritan Leper-Thankfulness”, Luke 17:11-19

Introduction: What do you appreciate?

November 26th is Thanksgiving Day. What are your plans for Thanksgiving? Are you planning a family reunion, delicious food, or a short trip? Are you thinking of observing social distancing more thoroughly?

Ten months have passed since the Covid-19 pandemic began. There is also good news about vaccine development. However, it is a common idea that the pandemic will continue until next year. The Covid-19 pandemic we are facing is unlikely to get any better soon. We don't know when it will end. People are facing financial problems, health problems, and death problems. It is not easy to say ‘thank you’ in this situation.

Many people are in pain, I know how hard and sad those who experience pain can suffer. I would like to comfort and support them. Yet what I have to say to you is, ‘We should confess our gratitude about the Lord Jesus’ in difficult situations.

The Bible says that true gratitude is confessed based on faith. In other words, mature gratitude is not gratitude for the good or bad of a situation, but for Jesus itself.

Although difficult situations continue to go on, I want you to confess your gratitude to Jesus rather than express gratitude only for situations and results.

As you know, I have a youngest son who is 10 years old. My son loves playing computer games. So when I bought a computer game as a gift for him, he loved it very much. At that moment, I became the best father in the world to my son.

Parents give gifts to their children because they love their children. All parents want their children to be happy. Also, they want a close relationship with their children.

When a child is not mature, a gift from parents can help children to like their parents. However, after the child matures, they become aware of the love of parents, and they express gratitude for it.

The Lord always loves us. He is also looking forward to a close relationship with us. The text that we will visit together today shows the heart of the Lord.

In today's text, ten lepers who live in the same place come to Jesus and ask for help. According to Jewish law at the time, lepers were forced to live in isolation from the town and were not allowed to live with others unaffiliated. Even if they recovered from leprosy, a priest's confirmation procedure was essential before they could return to society. (Leviticus 14:23)

Body: Ten Healed of Leprosy

First, let's look at the words of Luke 17:11. **“On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee.”(v.11)**

Jesus reached the border between Galilee and Samaria on his way to Jerusalem. As He entered a village he met ten lepers. At the time, lepers were thought to be people cursed by God. So people with leprosy were considered hopeless people. However, those who were living in despair sought to meet Jesus.

“And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”(v.12-13)

When the lepers see Jesus, they stand far away crying out. **“Jesus Master, have mercy on us!”** They have hope in Jesus and eagerly ask Jesus for help.

Jesus responds to their requests. **"When he saw them he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests' And as they went they were cleansed."**(v.14)

Jesus looks closely at the ten lepers and has pity on them. Jesus wants to solve the problem of their disease. The ten lepers are healed on the way by obeying Jesus' words **"to go and show themselves to the priests."**

In fact, it is not easy for them to obey Jesus' words and go to the priest. But they obey Jesus' words. And they are healed on the way.

But the focus of this story is not that they have been healed, but how they responded after the healing occurred, as people who experienced God's grace through Jesus.

By the way, Jesus healed ten people, and only one of them returned and confessed thanks to Jesus. **Luke 17:15-16 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."**(v.15-16)

By the way, one of the ten who returned is a Samaritan, not a Jew. The Samaritans were people who were not even treated as humans by the Jews.

But why did only this person return to Jesus? It is because this Samaritan thought of Jesus who healed them, and the other nine focused on their problem being solved rather than Jesus.

It's similar to how parents love their children and want to build a deeper relationship with them, but the young children are more interested in the gifts given to them than their parents. Also, this is like how we focus only on solving our problems rather than focusing on God through a deep relationship with God.

If the Lord doesn't solve our tough problems, will it have nothing to do with me?

Jesus clarifies what the Lord wants in Luke 17:17-18 says. Then said Jesus, **"Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"**(v.17-18)

This verse is a question Jesus asked to the returning Samaritan. In fact, even though the lepers aren't getting better yet, they obey Jesus' words and go to the priests. All ten lepers share such beliefs.

But looking at Jesus' questions, we can see that true faith must be accompanied by gratitude. Faith without gratitude, faith that cannot express gratitude, is not true faith.

In fact, many people seek God's help when they are in trouble. They pray earnestly. It is a very precious attitude. And in many cases, the problem is solved well. That is why there are many times when they give thanks to God.

But the real problem shows itself from then onwards. Gratitude is quickly forgotten and other desires often follow. After all, the only thing that remains in the place of such people's lives is an unfilled empty heart rather than satisfaction.

Conclusion: What is your criterion for living well?

Now, let's summarize today's sermon. Do you think you have lived well this year? How much money did you make? How high did you get up in the ranks? How much have you achieved what you want? These criteria can be a measure of social success.

However, that cannot be the criterion for living well.

What living well for a Christian depends on is how much they have realized the grace of the Lord this year and how they respond with gratitude.

After all, living well depends on having a deep relationship with God. So, gratitude is not forced. Also, gratitude is not an obligation. In fact, gratitude is good for us. In today's text, Jesus speaks to the Samaritan who returned. **“Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”(v.19)**

This verse shows that a certain relationship has been established between the Samaritan and Jesus. In other words, we cannot build a deep relationship with God without confessing our gratitude to the Lord Himself. However, the Samaritan leper, who returned to Jesus and confessed his gratitude, had a deep relationship with Jesus.

My dear brothers and sisters, I want us to be those who not only see the solution of the problem, but also see Jesus who solves the problem. This is the real blessing. And this kind of belief always brings us gratitude. If we have lived in a close relationship with God this year, I think we will confess our gratitude to the Lord even in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. I am confident that the Holy Spirit will be with you in the spirit of peace, rest, and healing.