

Question: Why would Jesus encourage us to be thankful people?

One time Jesus healed ten lepers. They had cried out, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us.” But Jesus did not reach out and touch them or command, “Be healed” as he often did. Instead, he told them to act as though they had already been healed by telling them, “Go show yourselves to the priests.” As they went they were healed. Yet only one returned to give thanks, and he was a despised Samaritan that many people in that time would have not expected to express thanks, especially to a Jewish Jesus. Jesus said, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the nine?” (Luke 17:11-19).

Although Jesus was disappointed that the nine did not return to give thanks, he was not disappointed for himself. He did not demand they offer thanks, and he did not heal them in order to receive personal praise. Jesus was disappointed because of what they missed by failing to show gratitude. To the one who did return to give thanks he said, “Go, your faith has made you well.” The word translated “well” is the usual word for salvation or spiritual healing. The despised Samaritan who did return to give thanks received both physical and spiritual healing. Through his gratitude, he received even greater blessings.

Thankfulness brings us into a deeper relationship with God because it leads us to reflect upon all he does for us. James, the brother of Jesus, wrote: “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explained that God his father “causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45). When we see every possession as a gift from God and every incident a divine influence at work for our good, we cannot help but love, praise and thank him daily.

In addition, thankfulness opens the door to opportunities for richer relationships with our fellow humans. With words of thankfulness, we bless, encourage and motivate one another to continue our good deeds and kindnesses. I recently heard that couples who say “Thank you,” to one another have longer lasting marriages. Thus, a thankful heart sees the whole world in a different light and experiences a joy that the ungrateful miss.

Gratitude is also a gift anyone can give whether poor or rich, young or old. It is a gift we can give even to the one who has everything. Neither a gift worth millions, church attendance nor any sacrifice in honor of

our Lord and God can ever compare to the richness of the gift of thanksgiving. However, a simple “thank you” can transform one’s own life, his relationship with the heavenly father and his relationship with those who surround him in this world. Come, let us “give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men” (Psalm 107:8).

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