

Give Thanks in All Circumstances

In Canada, we celebrate Thanksgiving in October. When Thanksgiving comes around each year, what do we care about most? Today, many people are no longer focused on giving thanks. They are getting ready to head to the shopping mall, because it is a day of big sales. I believe Thanksgiving was not established to give us a good reason to shop. It was established so that we would give thanks.

Luke 17 records that as Jesus entered a village, ten lepers stood at a distance and cried out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us" (Luke 17:13). Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priests, and as they went, they were cleansed. All ten were healed, but only one came back. He praised God with a loud voice and fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

Jesus asked, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?" (Luke 17:17)

First, those nine men may not necessarily be ungrateful people. They were probably just too excited and in too much of a hurry to get home and begin life again. The healing was real. Yet they received grace without returning to the Lord who gave it. Could the same be true of us? Honestly, we are often those nine. Our prayers are answered, the hard times pass, and we simply move on. Jesus' question is not meant to rebuke us. It is a gentle invitation: will you come back to the Lord of grace and give Him thanks?

The psalmist reminds himself, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (Psalm 103:2). He has to command his own soul, "forget not," which shows how easily we forget. In a world that constantly tells us what we still lack, gratitude is a

spiritual discipline. It calls us to stop and count what God has already given.

Next year, our church will celebrate its 50th anniversary. After Israel's victory, Samuel set up a stone and named it Ebenezer, saying, "Till now the LORD has helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12).

We prepare a series of events to mark this special occasion. We look back and see those who went before us, who began ministries in the midst of hardship and gave their time and resources. We see generation after generation of brothers and sisters who came to know the Lord here, grew here, and served here. Along the way, there has been no shortage of challenges, one after another. Yet our RCAC family is still here. Our church family has come this far not because of our own ability, but because God has faithfully led us.

The words "till now" in this verse look both backward and forward. The God who has helped us until now will surely lead us into the next season.

I know that some of our brothers and sisters and their families have gone through illness, job loss, the death of loved ones, or the many pressures of immigrant life. For you, Thanksgiving may not be easy.

Scripture says, "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). This does not ask us to thank God for suffering itself, nor to pretend we are not hurting. It calls us, in every circumstance, to keep trusting that God is with us and that His steadfast love has not changed. Gratitude like this is itself an expression of faith.

May we be not only people who receive grace, but people who return to give thanks. May God continue to strengthen our faith, so that together we can say, "Till now the LORD has helped us."

In Christ,
Pastor Mark