

An Attitude of Gratitude

Bible Background • LEVITICUS 13-14; LUKE 5:12-16; 17:11-19

Printed Text • LEVITICUS 13:45-46; LUKE 17:11-19 | Devotional Reading • ISAIAH 56:1-8

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will EXPLORE reasons only one of ten healed lepers turned back to Jesus in thanksgiving, SENSE the need in our lives for increased expressions of gratitude to God, and DEVELOP a plan for showing thanksgiving to God and others on a daily basis.

In Focus

Diane listened to the soloist at her church sing “My Tribute” by Andraé Crouch, and began to weep. Her 30th birthday was Monday and she reviewed all the major events of her life. Diane grew up taking care of her mother until cancer finally took her life. Diane, at the tender age of 15, held her mother’s body until she breathed her last breath.

Diane married out of high school and got pregnant right away. Soon, she watched her 3-day-old infant die in her arms, from a rare disease attacking the child’s heart. Her young husband, George, struggled with the baby’s death and ended up on medication for depression. Several times Diana spent long days sitting with him in the mental health facility after he had threatened suicide. Eventually, he got his medication regulated and slowly recovered, but it had been a long, hard road. Diane delivered two more children, but at the end of her last pregnancy, her doctor discovered a tumor in her breast. She had gone through the surgery and chemotherapy, now considering herself a cancer survivor in remission for almost five years. “To God be the glory ...” The song spoke to her heart. She had been through so many difficult challenges in life and she was thankful that God carried her through.

God has done so much for us and gratitude is the best response. What are you thankful for right now?

Keep in Mind

“One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, ‘Praise God!’”
(Luke 17:15, NLT)

Words You Should Know

- A. Mercy** (Luke 17:13) *eleeo* (Gk.)—To show compassion or pity; to help the afflicted
- B. Give thanks** (v. 16) *eucharisteo* (Gk.)—To show gratitude, at times specifically through prayer

Say It Correctly

Pericope. peh-RICK-oh-pee.

Eucharist. YOU-kar-ist.

KJV

Leviticus 13:45 And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.

46 All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.

Luke 17:11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

13 And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

16 And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

NLT

Leviticus 13:45 Those who suffer from a serious skin disease must tear their clothing and leave their hair uncombed. They must cover their mouth and call out, "Unclean! Unclean!"

46 As long as the serious disease lasts, they will be ceremonially unclean. They must live in isolation in their place outside the camp.

Luke 17:11 As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria.

12 As he entered a village there, ten men with leprosy stood at a distance,

13 crying out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

14 He looked at them and said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy.

15 One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, "Praise God!"

16 He fell to the ground at Jesus' feet, thanking him for what he had done. This man was a Samaritan.

17 Jesus asked, "Didn't I heal ten men? Where are the other nine?"

18 Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?"

19 And Jesus said to the man, "Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you."

The People, Places, and Times

Priest. Descendants from the tribe of Levi, a priest's duties included representing the people before God, caring for the Temple, teaching God's laws, and administering the Jewish sacrifices and services outlined in the Mosaic Law. Only they could declare a diseased person clean (Leviticus 13–14).

Leper. Someone who contracted the disease of leprosy was called a leper. "Leprosy" in the Bible could refer to any number of contagious skin diseases. The diseased person was quarantined and cut off from the rest of society. The leper was considered unclean according to Jewish law (Leviticus 13:44–46). Whenever they approached a person, the leper was required to yell, "Unclean! Unclean!" As a result, they were isolated socially and spiritually and treated as outcasts.

What is the psychological toll of being a social outcast?

Background

The lepers in this Scripture are not the same as in Jesus' previous encounter with a leper (Luke 5:12–15). In Luke 5, the leper is in the city amidst many other people, indicating that he was not treated in the same way as most lepers, though Luke does not tell us why he's treated differently. Jesus not only talks to the leper but touches and heals him.

This healing was different than Jesus' previous healing of lepers; it did not require His touch. He only commanded them to show themselves to the priests. This type of healing can be classified as a word of command and is very common in the Gospel narratives. When Jesus touched the previous leper, His compassion was more of the focus or theme. Here as He speaks this word of command, absent physical touch, His power is on display, though only one leper recognizes and acknowledges it.

Why is it important for Luke to present not only Jesus' power but also His compassion?

At-A-Glance

1. Living as a Leper (Leviticus 13:45-46)
2. Ten Lepers Ask for Healing (Luke 17:11–13)
3. Jesus Heals the Ten Lepers (v. 14)
4. One Leper Returns to Thank Jesus (vv. 15–19)

In Depth

1. Living as a Leper (Leviticus 13:45-46) Life for a leper in ancient times was extraordinarily unpleasant. First, there was the disease itself to deal with. The leprosy described in the Bible does not always look like the disease that is called leprosy today. In ancient times, "leprosy" covered a broader range of skin diseases. Whether suffering from the modern leprosy of losing

the sense of touch or another disease-causing welts, sores, and discoloration on the skin, there was a major physical toll on the body.

Second, there was the isolation. To keep from spreading the physical and ritual uncleanness to others, lepers were to live outside normal settlements until their health improved. Often, however, their health never would improve, exiling them from society for the rest of their lives.

Third, if they ever did need to interact with non-leprous people, they had to take embarrassing precautions. They had to make it obvious to any passerby that they were defiled with leprosy and everyone should keep away from them. Lepers made their clothes, hair, and face evidence of their condition. If that was not enough, they were also to shout out their contaminated state for all to hear.

2. Ten Lepers Ask for Healing (Luke 17:11–13) Jesus encounters ten lepers who observe Him entering a village. They keep their distance because leprosy was known to be contagious. One of the ten lepers, a Samaritan, lived among the group. Ordinary Jews refused to settle in the same area inhabited by Samaritans. However, the lepers, isolated from the general population, bonded with any they could and ignored ethnicity. They cry out to Jesus, addressing Him as “Master” (v. 13). This title indicates He had authority as a thought leader, rabbi, and teacher. They ask Him to have mercy, desiring for Him to extend compassion and alleviate their misery. They acknowledge Jesus as a worker of miracles, one who had a history of healing incurable diseases (Luke 5:15).

3. Jesus Heals the Ten Lepers (v. 14) Jesus instructs the lepers to go to the priest, the only authority able to pronounce them clean and permit them to re-enter their communities (Leviticus 13:13). After being observed by the priest and declared cured, the examiner would perform a ceremonial cleansing called the Law of the Leper (Leviticus 14).

All ten men start toward the Temple to find the priest, demonstrating extreme faith. Previously, Jesus healed a leper immediately by touching him (Luke 5:12–13). These lepers did not receive instant healing but acted exclusively on Jesus’ word. They were told to report to the priest, spots still covered their bodies. As they make their way down the road, they realize their flesh is healthy.

4. One Leper Returns to Thank Jesus (vv. 15–19) One leper sees the recovery of his body, stops, and goes back. After finding Jesus, he loudly proclaims God’s greatness. Prostrated at Jesus’ feet, he expresses gratitude. His posture testifies that Jesus deserved the same honor as God (Psalm 95:6; Revelation 4:10). Jesus asks the one returning leper, “Where are the nine?” (v. 17). The others, after being declared clean by the priest, went on their way, living their lives, seemingly taking their healing for granted. The Samaritan leper obtains more than physical healing: Jesus also says he was made “whole,” indicating the leper’s salvation (Luke 7:50). For Luke, genuine faith made you not only physically but also spiritually well.

Search the Scriptures

1. How were lepers distanced from society (Leviticus 13:45-46)?
2. What caused the leper to return (Luke 17:15-16)?
3. What caused Jesus to declare the thankful leper whole (v. 19)?

Discuss the Meaning

Are you the one leper who returned or one of the nine who did not? Name some ways we are tempted to take God's blessings for granted. What causes us to not be thankful? It's never a small thing to be thankful to the Lord. What does it mean to be thankful?

Liberating Lesson

Perhaps you have been treated as an outcast because of a characteristic others deem undesirable. Many have been discriminated against because of a condition beyond their control. We know Jesus lovingly ministered to people on the outskirts of society. We too should minister to the needs of the outcasts and the discriminated. As a class, seek ways you can minister to people in need, especially those on the fringes of society.

Application for Activation

We see daily how much easier it is to complain than give thanks. Busy schedules, aggravation, loneliness, anger, and stress all cause us to whine and complain instead of being grateful. The media stirs up an attitude of wanting more and being discontent. The negative attitudes are a result of ignoring God, and not acknowledging Him as the source of all our possessions and well-being.

Read Psalm 100:4-5. Sometime this week make up a prayer, song, poem, praise dance, or something creative based on these verses and the lesson. Share it with a member of your family, friend, or co-worker and ask them to be an accountability person. When you start complaining, tell them to remind you of your creative piece and your desire to be more grateful.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Leviticus 13:45-46; Luke 17:11-19 **Leviticus 13:45** And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. **46** All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.

Even without knowledge of germ theory and contagious diseases, the Israelites could practice these laws for the treatment of a leper and be fairly safe from the contagion. "The plague" referred to here is not the bubonic plague or Black Death, but a general word for the infection of leprosy. After a detailed and rigorous inspection and waiting period to determine if a patient truly has leprosy, the priests are instructed as to what measures to take. To keep the contagion from spreading, the lepers would tear their clothes (and burn them if they show signs of infection too, v. 52), shave their head (which makes it easier to track the spread of the disease on the scalp), cover their mouths (to prevent spread by coughing or sneezing), and issue an audible warning (so others can stay away). The leper would also be quarantined outside of the camp, away from dense populations.

The ancient Israelites did not see these steps as precautions against germs, however. They saw them as the way to prevent becoming "unclean" or "defiled," both from the Hebrew *tame'* (taw-MAY). The word is quite common in the Old Testament and refers to impurity, whether sexual, religious, or ceremonial. Even though sickness is not the sign of moral failing, it does serve as a reminder that cannot be ignored: there is sin, death, and decay in this world. Those contaminated with that decay are not fit to come before God, because our living God is holy. There is no death in Him, nor can death exist in His presence. His community must strive to be holy as He is holy, and so cannot incorporate anything that God abhors.

Luke 17:11 **And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.** This pericope (a self-contained section of the Gospel narrative) is a continuation of the travel narrative found in Luke, which has a limited direct reference to Jesus' travel and begins in 9:51 and ends in 19:27-48. The narrative's focus is not on the travel specifics, but Jesus' interactions with followers, crowds, Pharisees, and others interpreting the Law. His final destination is Jerusalem, the Holy City. There is little telling whom He will interact within this in-between space on the edge of two regions, but the verse suggests He could interact with Samaritans. Previously in Luke's Gospel (9:51-56), Samaria was a site of divisiveness.

12 **And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off.** This verse presents socio-cultural boundaries that are important to note. The ten men are identified by their physical condition which required physical boundaries. We learn about the geographic limitations of lepers in Numbers 5:2, and lepers are also found gathering near the city entrance in 2 Kings 7:3-5. Leprosy was a disorder with physical, emotional, and spiritual consequences, as those identified as lepers were dislocated from their communities and unable to worship.

13 And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Even if they are on the outskirts of the city because of their condition, the lepers know who has entered the city. They call out to Jesus, whom they have heard about and believe can respond to their situation. Those who are sick are often thought to be weak, but these men had the strength to cry out. They do not whimper or whine but lift their collective voices to get Jesus' attention.

The title of "Master" used by the lepers is peculiar in the New Testament and is often heard from the disciples. The Greek word used here is epistates (eh-pee-STA-tase), a word used to identify someone as a "boss" or "chief" with the focus on their power. When Jesus' disciples used the honorary title, it demonstrates their weak faith and limited understanding.

14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. To heal them, Jesus tells the lepers to go show themselves to the priests. Lepers were prohibited from entering the Temple and approaching the priests. If the Jews' place of worship was in Jerusalem, then the Samaritans must determine which priests to show themselves to because of the division between the Jews and the Samaritans. Here we begin to see how Jesus becomes the mediator between both groups. The inspection they will undergo by the priests is explained in the Old Testament (Leviticus 14:1-32). Although there was a ritual to identify and ban them from their communities, there was also a ritual if a leper was healed. After being examined by the priest, a leper could be designated "clean."

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God. On their way to the priests, the lepers realize they were healed; however, one leper does not continue to the Temple to receive clearance from the priests. Instead, he returns to the one who restored him. The Samaritan's healing is not only an account of physical healing but also redirecting his life, which is representative of what occurs with the saving work of Christ. The voice once joining in the collective cry is now a solo voice with a shout. As a leper, he shouted from afar, but as a cleansed and restored man, he can come directly into Jesus' presence.

16 And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. The act of worship exhibited by the Samaritan went beyond just calling Jesus "master"; he has physically shown his submission by falling at Jesus' feet, showing that the one who has healed is worthy to be praised. By indicating that the man is a Samaritan, Luke indicates that God's mercy extends beyond boundaries as will the message of the Gospel.

The Greek term for the Samaritan's thanksgiving is eucharisteo (ew-khah-ree- STEH-oh), from which we get the word eucharist to refer to Communion. The word means to show gratitude, at times specifically through prayer.

While a reader could become fixated on this man's identification as an outsider, the main point is this man's desire to praise God for the gift of restoration, both physical and spiritual.

17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? 18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. Though some translations render the Greek *katharizo* (ka-tha-REED-zo) here as “healed,” the KJV renders the word “cleansed,” which better captures the word’s possible religious connotations. Although Jesus adheres to the purity standards of the culture and sends the lepers to the priests for clearance, one man could not go on without giving honor to God for the healing no other could grant.

This story is told not to isolate the one leper as the one who did the right thing, but rather focus on the proper response to God’s grace. “It is right to give our thanks and praise,” suggests the Great Thanksgiving, which is included in the prayers of churches of many traditions (Book of Common Prayer). Thanksgiving is given to Jesus, but glory is given to God because His work is done publicly through Jesus.

19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole. Jesus offers words to the leper echoed in other healing narratives. Previously, healing associated with faith was received by the woman in the crowd who touched Jesus’ garment (Luke 8:46–48). As was also the case with the woman with the issue of blood, here again the word translated “whole” is *sozo* (Gk. SODE-zo), which also connotes salvation and healing. Whether it is the restoration of vision or body parts, the one healed or cleansed, in this instance, will rise and walk into their new reality. The healed Samaritan man is now a part of the people of God. He has not only been physically but also spiritually made whole.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

God Welcomes Foreigners
(Isaiah 56:1-8)

TUESDAY

Naomi's Sorrow Turns to Joy
(Ruth 4:3-6,13-15)

WEDNESDAY

Symptoms and Treatment of Leprosy
(Leviticus 13:1-8)

THURSDAY

Lepers Share Their Good News
(2 Kings 7:3-11)

FRIDAY

Many Samaritans Believe in the Savior
(John 4:39-42)

SATURDAY

Doing What Needs to Be Done
(Luke 17:1-10)

SUNDAY

Cultivate Gratefulness for Acts of Healing
(Leviticus 13:45-56; Luke 17:11-19)