

Date: 07/22/18

Title: A Methodist Gives Thanks

Scripture Reading: Psalm 107:1-2

John Wesley wrote a book, “The Character of a Methodist”, in which he outlines the five characters of a Methodist<sup>1</sup>. Wesley’s “The Character of a Methodist” helped to define the principles and practice to those who are called Methodists and being distinguished from other people.<sup>2</sup> It defined into five marks: a Methodist who loves God, rejoices in God, gives thanks, prays constantly, and loves others.<sup>3</sup> So, for this summer on Sundays, we have been spending time talking about those five characters of a Methodist. A couple of weeks ago, we talked about the first mark of a Methodist. The first mark was a Methodist should love God and our key verse was Deuteronomy 6:5 that "You shall love the Lord with all your heart with all your soul and with all your might." It is the first and greatest commandment of all which I stated as being “All IN for God”. Last week, we talked about the second mark which is a Methodist should rejoice in the Lord. Our key verse of the second mark of a Methodist was Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." With the verse, we learned that the joy of Christians is not dependent upon our pleasant circumstances. The joy comes from the presence of God in Christian's life, and Paul’s formula was presented: “Worry about nothing. Pray about everything. Be thankful in anything.”<sup>4</sup> Today, we come to the third mark and it is a Methodist should give thanks. Along with this third mark of a Methodist, the key verse is Psalm 107:1, "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!" and I will preach with Luke’s Gospel, “the ten lepers’ story”, for the third character of a Methodist.

According to World Biblical Commentary, scholars tell us that Psalm 107 was used in the ancient worship ritual of Israel.<sup>5</sup> In fact, it was used as a call to worship. When the people gathered in the temple, they would be a liturgist who would call them to worship. It would be shouted out, "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. (Psalm 107:1, ESV)" The people would

---

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Jackson edition of *The Works of John Wesley*, 1872

<sup>2</sup> “The Character of a Methodist” by John Wesley (1742) as revised and edited by Jacob W. Juncker

<sup>3</sup> Steve Harper, *Five Marks of a Methodists: The Fruit of a Living Faith* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015), p viii.

<sup>4</sup> Summary from Dr. Leonard Sweet, "Anxious, nothing. Prayerful, everything. Thankful, anything. Then, Peace."

<sup>5</sup> A summary of the suggestions and a helpful bibliography is in Leslie Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 60-63.

then know to respond, "For his steadfast love endures forever! (Psalm 107:1, ESV)" Then the liturgist would invite the congregation to confess: not a confession of sin, but a confession of thanksgiving. "Let the redeemed the Lord say so. Those who have redeemed from the troubles. (Psalm 107:2, ESV)" Right after that, the people would respond with a confession of thanksgiving - a hymn of praise. They would then continue with the focus on the rest of Hymn that thanks those that are worthy to praise God for.<sup>6</sup>

Let us take a moment to think about the words. Words really matter, don't they? I specially like the way we say, "thank you" to each other. When one person says, "thank you" to another, the response will be, "You're welcome." When you say and hear, "Thank you" and "You're welcome", it takes a social grace and it turns into an act of true hospitality. A relationship is being built. I want you to think that words really do matter. These two are the most important and significant words that we can say to each other which is "Thank you" and takes us to deeper place with other people. Thus, two words, "Thank you", brings us to the scripture lessons today.

According to Luke's gospel, Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. He was traveling through the border of country between Galilee and Samaria. He came near to the town and was met by ten lepers. The Ten lepers called out from a distance. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. (Luke 17:13, ESV)" Jesus then called back to them. "Go and show yourselves to the priests. (Luke 17:14, ESV)" Immediately they took off running. Here is the part that I wanted you to take notice in the story. As they were on their way to the priests, they were made clean. However, one of them who is a Samaritan, turned back and begins to praise God with a loud voice. He ran back to Jesus and fell on his face at Jesus' feet and "THANKED" him.

There are three observations I want to make about this story this morning. The first observation is there is a difference between salvation and healing. All ten of these lepers were healed. But only one of them experienced salvation. All ten of these lepers were free from life of social stigma and free from being exiled from the community and free from discrimination against. But only one of them returned to Jesus. Only one of the lepers among ten turned back and thanked

---

<sup>6</sup> A summary of the suggestions and a helpful bibliography is in Leslie Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 60-63.

Jesus. The others saw Jesus only as a healer. But, one leper saw Jesus as the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End as his Lord and his Savior. More over, the major difference between the one and the others is distinguished by two simple words, "Thank you"

The second observation I want to make this morning. The one leper's words, "thank you", act as the opportunity to acknowledge that this is not about me. This is about God. So, when he said "thank you", he was acknowledging that I am not the one who was responsible for my healing. It is not something I did: I didn't eat the right foods. I didn't pray a good prayer. I didn't observe Holy habits but I got HEALED. My healing was a result from the glory of God coming into my life. This is not about me and this is about the glory of God.

I like the song writer, Leonard Cohen, because his lyrics are very meditating and magnificent. One of his famous song is called "Anthem" and there is a line in that song that I want to call to your attention. For in that song, he poetically makes the point that the scripture lesson makes today. It says, "Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in."<sup>7</sup> "There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in." This leper, who said "Thank You" to Jesus, understood that, in somehow and someway, his leprosy was healed and the Lord came into his life and poured glory out upon him. In a similar way, the cracks in our lives that we consider to be witnesses of is a vulnerable place where God's spirit gets through to us. For it is very difficult for God's Spirit to get through to us, Once God's spirit gets into our lives, and everything goes perfectly.

The Last observation I want you to be aware of is from the passage of Psalm 107. It is that "Thanksgiving" is the natural response of Christians to God. John Wesley was very methodical in his faith. He was methodical in that he gave thanksgiving to God in two different ways. According to book, "The Works of John Wesley", John Wesley divided his prayer life so that every Saturday it was his day for thanksgiving. The first six days of week, Sunday through Friday, he spent focusing upon two great commandments which are "Love God and Love Neighbors." He was constantly evaluating his life in prayer how to become more Holy and how become more Christ like in his love for God, and in his love for his Neighbors. On Saturdays, he

---

<sup>7</sup> Anthem, Leonard Cohen, <https://genius.com/Leonard-cohen-anthem-lyrics>

took a break from that. He began to look back over the last week and count the number of times that God showed up in his life. He gave thanks for those times. He started in more general terms and he worked down to the very specific times and gave thanksgiving to God with each of those in his prayer lives.<sup>8</sup>

I want to issue a call to action this morning. The call to action for this week is that, first of all, you should continue to pray. Pray for our nation. Pray for our church and ministry. Pray for yourself that Glory of God will continue to be revealed in your life. The other thing I invite you to do is to make a list of those times God has come into your life for which you should give thanks to God. To make a list, I invite you to go back to your calendar and starts from January this year and as you go through page after page, just begin to write down the places where God showed up in your life. Once you got that list, offer praises to God and say "Thank You."

One last thought that I would like to share is it seems to me that the Samaritan leper and the story really participates in God's story in a significant way. This story is revealing God to us in an important way. Use your imagination with me. That faithful morning, you get a wakeup call. It is a voice and that says, "Wake up." Jesus is on his way to you, and you will find yourself written into the Gospel according to Luke. And Christians for centuries would be reading about you and you will spend eternity with Christ. That is pretty significant wakeup call, isn't it? But how often do we get that wakeup call? It is "Everyday." We wake up and the voice speaks to us and says that today could be a significant day. God wants to invite you into God's story. If you play your cards right, praise God and give Thanks. You will know God's peace. In the passage we read last week, Philippians chapter 4, I suggested to you for Paul's formula for living your life. In verses 6 and 7, "do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7, ESV)" Those two verses could be summarized into Paul's formula for living your lives: Worry about nothing. Pray about everything. Be thankful in anything and then the peace will be yours.<sup>9</sup> Steadfast of our Lord that runs deep in us and endures forever. Dear Lord, let it be. Amen.

---

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Jackson edition of *The Works of John Wesley*, 1872.

<sup>9</sup> Summary from Dr. Leonard Sweet, "Anxious, nothing. Prayerful, everything. Thankful, anything. Then, Peace."