

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
COMPASS, PA

October 9, 2022 – PENTECOST 18 / PROPER 23, YR. C

The Rev. Dr. Nina George-Hacker

Sermon: “Remember... be Thankful ... and Share”

2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15c (Through Elisha the Prophet, Naaman the Syrian is healed by the God of Israel)  
Psalm 111 (Praise for the Lord's mighty power, as well as His gracious compassion)  
2 Timothy 2:3-15 (Encouragement for living, in light of the Resurrection of Christ)  
St. Luke 17:11-19 (Jesus heals ten lepers—but only one gives thanks)

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The 19<sup>th</sup>-century British author, G. K. Chesterton, once wrote: “When it comes to life, the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude.”<sup>1</sup> In today's Gospel lesson, Jesus wants to teach us the difference.

When the lepers approach Our Lord, they address Him as, “Jesus, Master.” By calling Christ “Master,” they're acknowledging their utter dependence on His power and authority. They also cry out, “Have mercy on us!” confessing their need for His compassionate healing. And because Jesus is the One who is, who was, and will ever be, our Merciful Healer, He cures them. But why does He send the men away, afterward? As a good Jew concerned to follow the laws of Moses, Jesus directs them to go to the priests for the ritual cleansing that was required upon recovery from an illness.

Nine of the lepers do as they are told. But a tenth—whom we learn is a Samaritan, and not subject to the Jewish law—returns to Jesus to offer his profound thanks. *Think of it!* In our time, the miracle this man experienced would be like suddenly being healed of AIDS or terminal cancer. While Jesus certainly did not begrudge the other nine their healing, He says to *this* man, “Your *faith* has made you well.”

Here, the Greek expression (*sesóken*) is the same used in Matthew 9:22 for “healed” and in Luke 7:50 for “saved.”<sup>2</sup> As such it carries the further connotation of wholeness, extending even to salvation. In effect, Jesus is saying, “Your faith has made you *whole*; your faith has *saved* you.” Here, Christ indicates that God wants to bless each of His beloved children—that means us, too!—with a wholeness of spirit that is *beyond the mere physical cure of our bodies*.

Today's Old Testament account of God healing the Syrian commander, Naaman, shows us that Our Lord is so compassionate, He even wants to cure those who *don't* believe in Him. And yet, look how that story ends: Naaman is so impressed by the divine healing he has received, he declares, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel.” Often, God *will* choose to heal an unbeliever, so that person might come to faith.

But for those of us who already believe, Jesus is asking us to make Him Master of our lives. And, like those lepers long ago, to confess to Him our bodily weakness, our soul-sickness, our mental anguish, the dis-ease in our families. In short, our need for healing—whether physical, spiritual, emotional, or relational.

Moreover, pointing to the Samaritan who returned to give thanks, Christ invites us to openly express our thanksgiving for the wholeness, healing, and salvation God gives us by His grace. As Christians, we are to have an “attitude of gratitude.” When? Just sometimes? On Thanksgiving Day? Only when things are going well, and we get what we want?

In First Thessalonians 5:18 (NLT), we read: “Be thankful in *all circumstances*, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.” We also read in Ephesians 5:20 (NLT) “give thanks *for everything* to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And in Colossians 3:17 (NIV): “*whatever you do*, in word or deed, *do everything* in the name of the Lord Jesus, *giving thanks* to God the Father through him” (*emphasis added*).

Fine. We get it. But let's be honest. Sometimes it's genuinely difficult to be thankful in *every circumstance*. For months, you plan a great vacation, then get sick and can't enjoy it. You're due to receive some money, but first have to endure a nightmare of seemingly endless paperwork and aggravating phone calls. You lose your electricity and along with it, everything in your refrigerator that you just brought home from the grocery store. And so on. *Stuff happens!*

And when we feel incapable of being grateful, perhaps we need to remember that humor is the best medicine, and even God appreciates a joke—after all, He made us, right?

One dear lady was not a cook, but the family decided that after many years, they should eat at home for Thanksgiving. She said, “I’ve cooked this turkey for the first time and I’m gonna bring it to the table. If it’s not good, don’t say a word. If it’s not good, there will be no negative comments, we’ll just go to a restaurant and have a meal.” So, she went to the kitchen to get the turkey, only to return to the dining room to see her husband and son by the door with their hats and coats on.<sup>3</sup>

A “Peanuts” cartoon showed Charlie Brown bringing Snoopy his dinner on Thanksgiving Day. But it was just his usual dog food. Snoopy looked at his bowl and complained: “This isn’t fair. The rest of the world today is eating turkey with all the trimmings, and all I get is dog food, because I’m a dog.” He stared at his food for a while, then said, “I guess it could be worse. I could be a turkey.”<sup>4</sup>

A little boy’s parents asked him to pray before dinner. As he bowed his head, he looked at the plate before him. Then, closing his eyes, he prayed: “Lord, I don’t like the looks of this, but I’ll thank You and eat it anyway.”<sup>5</sup>

We may not feel thankful on Sunday mornings either. Yet, during every Eucharist, we say:

*“Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
It is right to give Him thanks and praise.  
It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere,  
to give thanks to You Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth ...”* (BCP 361).

Notice that we say “always and everywhere.” In fact, the word “Eucharist” itself comes from the Greek word “*Evcharistia*”—meaning, “to give thanks.” To ensure that this thanks is no empty expression of ritual gratitude, what follows the Great Thanksgiving is the “*Anamnesis*,” or “remembering.” This is the part that begins, “On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread ...” *Remembrance* is essential to *giving thanks*.

That is why, in the Communion liturgy, together we recall God’s saving deeds of old, and God’s mighty acts in Jesus Christ, including the institution of the Lord’s Supper through which we recall—and give thanks for—Christ’s sacrificial death for our sins.

Just as God does not forget us, we are not to forget God. We are *to remember and be thankful*. Have you tried recording at least *one thing* each day for which you could thank God? If not, keep a pad of paper or a white board handy, and give it a try! You’ll be amazed how many blessings you can count, if only you make the effort to *remember*.

Remembering what God has done, has made possible, *or has mercifully prevented* doesn’t simply provide us with a sense of self-satisfaction. It helps transition us from *thanks-giving* to *thanks-living*. The more we approach life with an attitude of gratitude, the more spiritual fruit God is able to produce in us, resulting in a bountiful harvest. What kind of a harvest? In Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV), we are told: “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Remember, last Sunday, we heard about the simplicity and humility with which St. Francis lived his life? And how, after begging for food, he gave it away to those who were hungrier than he was? He understood the relationship between *thanks-giving* and *thanks-living*.

As we go forth this week, let us be like the leper who remembered to thank Jesus for his healing; like St. Francis, who considered everything a gift from God and was thankful at all times; and like the little kid who wasn’t too sure about his dinner, but was intentionally grateful anyway.

A Christlike attitude of gratitude requires both remembrance and thanksgiving—and sharing our blessings with others. May God grant each of us the grace to recollect what God *has done* and *is doing* for us, and then to share His gifts with those around us, so that we may experience the wholeness, healing, and salvation the Lord longs for us to experience.<sup>6</sup> Thanks be to God!

<sup>3</sup> Adapt. Christ Episcopal Church, Cooperstown NY’s weekly email, 12 October 2013.

<sup>2</sup> “The Words ‘Saved’ and ‘Healed,’” 4 January 2010, *Precepts: Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, [precepts.wordpress.com](https://precepts.wordpress.com/2010/01/04/the-words-saved-and-healed/) <<https://precepts.wordpress.com/2010/01/04/the-words-saved-and-healed/>> 3 October 2022. Used with permission.

<sup>3</sup> Adapt. “An Unpleasant Turkey,” [Ministry127.com](https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/an-unpleasant-turkey/) <<https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/an-unpleasant-turkey/>> 3 October 2022. Used with permission.

<sup>4</sup> Adapt. “Be Thankful You Aren’t a Turkey,” [Ministry127.com](https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/be-thankful-you-are-not-a-turkey/) <<https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/be-thankful-you-are-not-a-turkey/>> 3 October 2022. Used with permission.

<sup>5</sup> Adapt. “Thankful on Purpose,” [Ministry127.com](https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/thankful-on-purpose/) <<https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/thankful-on-purpose/>> 3 October 2022. Used with permission.

<sup>6</sup> Adapt. Nina George-Hacker, “Thanks-giving is Thanks-living,” 20 November 2011, Calvary Episcopal Church, Burnt Hills, NY. Used with permission.