**Luke 17:11-19**

On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. **12** And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance **13** and lifted up their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” **14** When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed. **15** Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; **16** and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. **17** Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? **18** Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” **19** And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

**“The Right To Give Thanks”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. At Thanksgiving time, many pause to count their blessings. This tradition as we have it in our culture did not come from the church but arose from the state. George Washington was the first president to proclaim a national day of thanks in 1789. It never hurts to acknowledge the good gifts a person has received. Where Christmas gets all the religious controversy, few end up picking on Thanksgiving. Most would consider not giving any thanks to be selfish or ungrateful. It is a blessing for our country that we can still be thankful as a people. Government can never mandate this for the answer arises from the good we each have been given.

However, as Christians we know a day of thanks is never enough. All good at any time comes from God. The Lord’s Prayer teaches us this when we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” As Luther explains, “God certainly gives daily bread, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread **WITH** thanksgiving.” The baptized daily give thanks directly it all to God. As Moses told Israel, so Christ now reveals the truth that the Lord is, “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness…” (Exodus 34:6). Whether God provided for Israel, Jesus healed ten lepers, or whatever goodness we receive in our lives. We find God is good at what He does, which is to give.

The problem is the right we have to give thanks falls short. Taking things for granted is what we naturally do as sinners. Ten lepers cried out for mercy and they heard the cure for their lives. Yet, when Jesus sent them away nine decided to keep on going and never look back. They received a great blessing for their body allowing them to return home, be part of their community again, and even have a normal life. These nine certainly appreciated what Jesus did, but they no longer saw any need for Him. When Jesus had stepped into the village, it was good news. Except now with every step away from Him, their hearts turned to be more and more against the Savior God sent to save sinners.

Yes, Black Friday sales now invade our nation’s day of thanksgiving, but beneath all this buying and selling is what stabs at each of our hearts. We miss what God gives and take for granted His blessings. Like God’s people Israel, do we stumble into entitlement mentality as if He owes us? If desires are not satisfied or we taste disappointment is it our right to grumble and complain? Are you mindful to give thanks more than on one day or just at one meal? Do you recognize true thankfulness is not patting yourself on the back or someone else, but the act of God’s grace? Recall what Luther teaches about those words, “forgive us our trespasses?” He states, “We are neither worthy for thing things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them…for we daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment.” Like the cleansed Leper, repent and return to the Lord your God. All that we ever had, hold today, or receive tomorrow is a gift we never earned for ourselves.

In spite of ingratitude, Jesus did not strike out against the nine lepers. He only said, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” The shock of it all was that thankfulness came from a stranger, a Samaritan, an outcast who had faith more than the Jews. Jesus did not render judgment for the nine lepers already did it to themselves by rejecting Him. Their own ungrateful hearts had no room to receive the promised Savior. Yet, the Father in heaven was grateful for the work of His Son. With every step to Jerusalem, Jesus would not be content until He died on the cross. His sacrifice is the cure that now calls forth true thankfulness from all people. God is well pleased with His Son and any who trust in Jesus find approval by His Father.

Plenty can give praise over a decorative meal, a place among family, and even time for watching football. Yet, all of this is useless without the one thing needful, which is the salvation of God through faith in Jesus. Worse than leprosy or any bodily ailment is the infection of sin that chokes us to death. Christ brings us His cleansing forgiveness to purify our lives with His love. By Word and Sacrament God gives us a place and purpose always to give thanks. It is contentment grounded on a kingdom not of this world. As the words of institution proclaim, “Our Lord Jesus Christ on the night when He was betrayed took bread and when HE HAD GIVEN THANKS, He broke and gave it to the disciples and said.” Like the Samaritan, we fall down before Jesus at the Lord’s Supper. To join with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven is thankfulness over the true goodness of God given in Jesus. His life saves our lives so we say with St. Paul, “In any and every circumstance, I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

Who fathoms how much God gives to us that we do not deserve? Who values how much God withholds from us what we want because it would only do evil? Who can see how much God does for us when suffering, loss, and hardship come in the shape of a cross? Thankfulness in the church does not come from our culture or a mandate by the state. It rests alone upon Christ. This is what draws us before Him who comes by Word and Sacrament. He gives the answer, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.” This is not a self-generated faith, or faith sustained by me, and it certainly is not a faith in my faith. Who can be grateful for a faith based on it being my work? This faith praised by Jesus to go your way is what God creates, sustains, instructs, and blesses all by the promise of His Word.

Without thankfulness, life becomes bitter, days grow dull, and finally hearts grow cold to one another. This is why giving thanks never hurts, always helps, and renders good against evil. Consider then brothers and sisters in Christ, what blessing you have to not only receive and give thanks for one another. This happens also within our nation and culture, but only the baptized bring thanks to God in what He does for us. It is gratefulness over what is good for life and finally who alone can save. Israel heard this in the wilderness, Jesus told it to the Devil, and why we can remain thankful today. “…Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” God keep us grateful of His Word and defend us from forgetting His boundless love that lets us look to Jesus. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.