

The Samaritan

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[0 : 00] It refers not only to the blessing that we might receive in our body if we are sick and we are healed, but that it can represent for us all the material and the physical blessings that our gracious God bestows upon us.

We would start there. This evening we're going to have cause, and we do have cause, to thank God above all else for spiritual blessings, but we will not be unmindful that from the very outset, the smallest as the greatest of the material and physical benefits that we enjoy, they come from our gracious God, and to him we give thanks.

I think it's characteristic of us as human beings that we are often so conscious of the negative side of things. We're so conscious of shortages, if ever some commodity is in short supply.

We're so conscious of illness, if ever some type of illness or infirmity strikes us, that we are all too ready to forget the other side, that if we are conscious of shortage, it is because normally there is none.

And if we are conscious of illness, it is because normally our gracious God gives us health and strength of body and mind. And so the very first reminder to us this evening, why should we give thanks, is because of these that we might term so ordinary blessings, these temporal material favours that we receive from our gracious God.

[1 : 40] And here, and here of course, and here of course, is the value, or one of the values of our, at every meal, giving thanks, blessing God for what he has given.

It can be so perfunctory, we perform it so often, by rote, and yet, it is a reminder to us, at every meal table, that our temporal blessings, the very food we eat, comes from our gracious God, and that we are called continually to be giving him thanks.

So however mechanical the little prayer might be, it is nonetheless, in the gracious providence of God, a reminder that we have so much for which to be thankful.

I remember reading some years ago, an interview that one of the last Christian missionaries to leave communist China, and the communist took over, gave to the local press in Hong Kong.

He was a Salvation Army officer, and had managed to remain in China for some three or four years after the communist took over, most of that time in prison.

[2 : 55] And he told in this interview, the secular newspaper, there was a very fine Christian testimony given, he told of the tremendous suffering that he had undergone, particularly the undernourishment which he suffered during these years.

And he said to the newspaper reporters, that he had always given thanks to God, he had always said grace, before meals.

But that during these years, but that during these years in prison camp, so conscious was he of the merciful hand of God upon him in all his privations, that when a glass of water was provided, that he learned there also to give thanks to God, conscious that what he had so often taken for granted was indeed from the loving hand of his gracious God.

But of course, healing in the scriptures does not refer merely to healing of the body. And we are often taught that when we read of healing, it represents a greater healing, the healing of the soul.

You remember how Matthew, in a certain part of his gospel, as he sees the Lord Jesus Christ healing many who came to him, quotes from Isaiah 53.

[4 : 19] And he says this, our Lord's performing all these healings, was in fulfillment of the scripture which says that he bore our illnesses, the version that is given us of Isaiah 53.

A reminder that our Lord Jesus Christ not only brought to us, or can bring to us, healing of body, but that he bore greater illnesses, the illness and sickness of our soul.

And surely you and I tonight, God's people in this place, desire to praise him for the healing of soul, for the blessing that came to us, that has come in Christ, and that was renewed to us in this communion season.

And so it is that it is highly appropriate that as we receive such blessings, we should be led to thanksgiving. You remember how Psalm 40, dealing with salvation, where the psalmist tells us, he took me from a fearful pit and from a miry clay, and on a rock he set my feet, establishing my way.

There was the experience of salvation, the experience of blessing. And to what does it lead? Not merely to receiving the blessing that God gives, but you know how it goes.

[5 : 44] As he put a new song in my mouth, our God to magnify. Salvation blessing leads to thanksgiving. And so it is appropriate that this evening we gather to give God our thanks for the abundance of the mercies that he has bestowed upon us.

But I think it is also good to remember the teaching of the Apostle Paul, when we think of giving thanks for blessings received, that he tells us, under the guidance of the Spirit, that in everything we should give thanks.

Not only for those blessings that are so evidently blessings, not only for the favors that we receive, but even when God's providence wears a frowning face, even when we would be tempted to say these are no blessings at all, these are the misfortunes that happen, even in these, the Apostle Paul reminds us that we can give thanks to Almighty God.

I have here a very brief quotation from Rabbi Duncan, so well known in our free church history, professor in the new college of the free church after the disruption, and he tells of experiences of his and says the following, I thank God for the removal of sickness.

But I have been able to give thanks for sickness, for health, for light, for darkness, for the hiding of God's face.

[7 : 28] And it may well be that some child of God here this evening has to confess that perhaps this communion season was not as blessed and as refreshing as others that they've known.

Perhaps you didn't feel so much of the gracious presence of God. Perhaps the great reality of Calvary and the atonement and the person of the Lord Jesus and his gracious work, perhaps these weren't borne in upon your soul as at other times.

Ah, but there is still cause to give him thanks. For whatever our frames and feelings, he is the same God. And for blessings received, we can and should and must give him thanks.

Paul and Silas, think of them there, in the prison cell in Philippi, their backs aching from the beatings that they received, their feet in the stocks, how miserable their situation, how easily they could have said, as we might well have said, what a desperate plight we're in.

But at midnight they sang praises to God in the darkness as also in the light. Why should we give thanks? Firstly, for blessings received.

[8 : 45] But then I'd suggest another reason that is given in this story, and it is because it is expected by the Lord. This man gave thanks because he was healed.

But we find that the Lord Jesus Christ expected and waited for the thanksgiving of his people who owed so much to him. Because when this man came back to him, we're told that our Lord's question was, were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine?

I thought they would be healed. I was waiting for their thanks, for the expression of their gratitude. Remember how the prophet Malachi had to lament in his day of the ingratitude of the people of Israel, and God speaks through his servants saying, if I am a father, where is my honor?

They were prepared to offer respect, we're told, to the governor of the land. But no respect, no honor for the father whose people they were.

God himself expects from you and from me the expression of our thanks. It's not, of course, that we can enrich God by our thanks.

[10 : 11] It's not that we can make him any better, any greater than he is. It's not in a certain sense that he needs our thanks, for he is sufficient unto himself.

And the writer of Psalm 50, he expresses this very feeling. In Psalm 50, at verse 9, he gives us the words of God, the great almighty God, who says, I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds, but every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

What then can we give to God? The psalmist says there is nothing, it is all his. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof.

Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Because if the psalmist says there is nothing, God is too great, it's all his, so what can I give?

What can I offer to almighty God? And here comes the answer. Offer unto God thanksgiving. this he expects.

[11 : 31] This he waits for. Martin Luther put it this way, actually commentating on the story of the ten lepers. he says, this is the right worship of God, to return, glorifying God with a loud voice.

This is the greatest work in heaven and earth, and the only one which we may do for God, for of other works he stands in need of none, neither is he benefited by them.

And yet he waits. in his sovereign grace and mercy, he the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God he waits for your thanks, for the expression of your love and of mine and gratitude for what he is and what he has done.

And obviously, we ask ourselves, does he receive that which he expects? So there then is the why of thanksgiving, for blessings received and also because it is expected by the Lord.

So now let's consider what I call the who of thanksgiving, who give thanks or should give thanks. And this miracle here expresses perhaps the more negative side because we can see from here that it is not men by nature, not men as they are in themselves by nature.

[13 : 06] They do not give thanks to God. There were these nine or there were Jews. They ought to have given thanks but as soon as they received the blessings, they ran off to enjoy the blessings and thought nothing of the giver.

For the human heart is not naturally grateful. When you and I give thanks to God, we are doing something that by nature we would never do.

We would never acknowledge our indebtedness to him even for material things. Remember how the Apostle Paul puts it in that searing indictment in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans of the whole human race?

When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful. And we remember our first parents there in Eden how tempted by Satan although God had given them all the trees in the garden, all the wonders of his creation and all the provision, all that they would ever need.

And yet they grumbled about the one tree that they were not permitted to touch. How true to life, how true to your heart and mine, by nature we are not thankful.

[14 : 30] And so we need the gracious touch of the Spirit of God that we might indeed give to him the thanks and the gratitude that he deserves. But then notice here too that gratitude or thankfulness does not come from people engaged in religious practices.

because these nine men or the ten when they were healed, our Lord says to them go show yourselves unto the priests. So they were on their way to God's representatives to the house of God.

They were on their way to perform the different ceremonies and rituals laid down by the law of God. They were engaged in religious activity and yet in the midst of it they were not thankful.

It was no guarantee of thankfulness that they were religiously engaged. And what a warning to each one of us. We're here tonight at a thanksgiving service.

That's why we've come. But that in itself is no guarantee that in your heart or in mine there is thankfulness to God. Our attendance here, our outward thanksgiving, is it not true that it may mask a heart that is hard and ungrateful, that it may mask perhaps a bitterness, a grumbling spirit, a feeling that although God has given us much, yet why not this or that other?

[16 : 07] There is no guarantee of a thankful spirit that we are even here in the house of God at the close communion season. So it's not men by nature, it's not men engaged in religious practices, nor, as this story points out, is it necessarily those with most reason to be thankful.

Surely this is one of the points of the nationality of the tenth man. There were nine Jews and there was one Samaritan. Now you would have expected, but if any were to be thankful, it would be the Jews, this favored people, this people who knew that the Messiah was to come, and who had now met in person with the Messiah.

They had all the favors of God, they had been showered upon them, they knew it all. If any should have been thankful, it was vain, for they had so much.

But this Samaritan, from the despised race, the man who had had, in a sense, so little, he was the one that showed thankfulness.

And this, I think, comes very home to each one of us. We have so much for which to be thankful. God, in his gracious mercy, has placed us in congregations, that his word is preached according to the scriptures.

[17 : 37] He has permitted us to form part of a church that, in spite of its many failings, nonetheless, seeks to proclaim honestly and fully the word of God.

We belong to a tradition that has known much of the favor and the blessing of God. If there should ever be a grateful people, we are that people. And so this comes home with peculiar relevance to us.

Could it be that as on this occasion, those outside, those like the Samaritans who have had so little, but then without all the background that we have or that these Jews have, then receive the touch of God's hand upon them or the smile of his favor, they show gratitude.

For you and I are so little ready to do it. I remember some years ago on a visit to the headquarters of the Wycliffe Bible Translators in the jungle of Peru, that while we were there, a consignment arrived of the New Testament, which had just come from the press, translated into the language of one of the tribes of the Peruvian jungle, the Campa Indians.

For the first time in their experience, these Indians would have the whole New Testament. And so far as I know, as far as I remember at that time, we were told by the linguists on the base that there were perhaps only three or at the most four of all the jungle tribes that had the complete New Testament.

[19 : 19] Now we didn't see the actual handing over of these scriptures to the Campa Indians. We were told of it, but I'm sure you've read of this in Bible Society magazines and reports of tribes here and there, when perhaps a gospel, just a gospel is translated, and how many miles are traversed that these people might have something of the word of God, how much is saved up, how much is sacrificed, that they might have even a part of the scriptures.

And what a favored people we are. The word of God, why we've had it from our childhood. We've had it in so many versions and translations.

We've had it preached and we've had it read and we've had it expounded. We can read it at our family worship and privately. We can hear it and see it as often as we wish. And is that the thankfulness in our hearts for the abundance of God's favors that there ought to be.

The who of thanksgiving. The point here is that it's not natural to man, and sometimes it is a rebuke to us that those who have received so much less are nonetheless demonstrating a thankfulness that is lacking to us.

But let's pass on to consider what I call the how of thanksgiving. How should thanksgiving be offered to God?

[20 : 56] I'd suggest that there are two elements here. The first is humbly. God should be thanked humbly for all his favors. We certainly see this in the case of this man in verse 16.

He fell down on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanksgiving. thanks. He fell down in utter humility at the feet of Jesus.

You know, I think that there are times when some people don't express thanks to others because they have the feeling that these others are there to serve them, and their pride will not permit them to give adequate thanks.

But this can never be true of the people of God. But at the hand of our gracious God, we deserve absolutely nothing, nothing but condemnation.

And when we come to thank him, as we do tonight, it is in utter humility, prostrate before his great majesty, thankful for even the touch of the hem of his garment, thankful for the least of his mercies, deserving not one.

[22 : 13] For God is not our debtor, but we have received in these days. We have received of his gracious love and mercy, not because he is bound to give to us his blessing.

If he has bound himself in his covenant mercy, it is of pure, sovereign grace. And so the only attitude that is appropriate to us is that of the leper, prostrate, in humility at his feet.

The language that John Newton used in that hymn that's so well known now, some people would consider that it's rather exaggerated language, but surely it is the only language that we can use of ourselves.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch, like me, and as we read through the experience of the author of John Newton himself, can we understand something of the type of attitude that is expected of us.

There, he himself gave orders to write on his tombstone, a servant of slaves, who had plumed Lord's death, and then, as he tells us there, he was raised up, he was pardoned, and appointed a preacher of that gospel that he had labored so long to destroy, a wretch like me.

[23 : 45] Can we say anything more? And since that's so, then with humility, let us tonight offer our thanks to God for all his favors to us.

Thanksgiving should be offered humbly, but I think there's another element here that we notice, and it is that thanksgiving is offered outwardly. It is not something merely inward, secret, and hidden.

This man, he came to Jesus in verse 15, and when he saw he was healed, he turned back, and with a loud voice, glorified God. I wonder if you've noticed a point that Matthew Henry makes in his commentary on these verses, he says of this tenth man that he lifted up his voice in his praises, as he had done in his prayers.

Because we're told in verse 13, they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, master of mercy on us. They were prepared to shout. They didn't care what others thought or said of them.

They had a need, and they brought the need loudly to the Lord Jesus Christ. But then when they were healed, nine of them were silent. They'd been prepared to cry out in their need, but they were not prepared to cry out in gratitude to God.

[25 : 10] But one was, and outwardly, not ashamed to make known the greatness and the goodness of God, he thanked them for what he had done.

And here I think we can see the difference, perhaps, a difference in emphasis between what might be considered two synonyms in English, on the one hand gratitude, and on the other thanksgiving.

I think perhaps I'm right in suggesting that gratitude may be merely an inner emotion. There will be no thanksgiving unless we feel gratitude.

But gratitude, perhaps it's true to say, can remain within the heart. We can feel it. We can feel it deeply and sincerely that thanksgiving must be expressed.

And this is what God desires, that we would feel our thanks and that we would, as this man did, express our thanks. Now how do we do it?

[26 : 15] Well, I'm sure you can think of various ways how this could be done. Let me suggest that as we gather here this evening we have an opportunity to do it. Is it not expressed so often in the singing of our praise?

Why do we sing at our services? Well, the Lord has given us a manual of praise. But why? Simply that we may praise Him, that we may thank Him, that we may express in an open, public, corporate way that which we feel our gratitude to God.

And is it not then so fundamental that in our singing praise to God there should be a heart that is filled with a sense of His goodness to us.

And then our singing, even those who perhaps aren't such good singers as others, but corporately at least, will our singing not be joyful?

And will it not be cool? And will there not be a sense? Even for one here or one there may not be much of a singer. Will there not be a sense and a feeling that, my, there's something to sing about.

[27 : 22] But there is a God who is worthy of our praise for what He has done and is doing for us. And then of course our thanksgiving is expressed.

You can think of so many ways in our offerings as we came in this evening and began our worship as we deposited our offerings there in the collection plate.

There we give our thanks. we express in that simple material way our thanksgiving to God, not merely as a custom, but because this to us is one way among others by which, along with this man, we can express our thanksgiving to our gracious God.

But of course, most of all, as somebody has said in one of these neat little phrases, Thanksgiving is thanksgiving, the whole of life, a song of praise and thanksgiving to our gracious God.

Well, we've seen the why of thanksgiving and the who of thanksgiving, the how of thanksgiving. There are two more points, but they're both much briefer. There is the when of thanksgiving.

[28 : 38] When ought we to give thanks to God? Now, of course, we know from the Psalms that we should always be giving thanks to God. God will I bless all times.

His praise my mouth shall still express. There is no time when we should not give thanks to God. But I think that here there is a particular reminder that there are moments in the life of the believer and in the life of congregations when particular thanks can be expressed.

This man, he had been healed and he had no desire to let the moment pass. He saw that there and then there was an immediate call to give thanks to God.

Am I not correct in saying that this very service which we hold this evening on the Monday of a communion season was first instituted or became a custom in our church because of a special cause for thanks to God for favors received at a particular point there at the Kirker shops.

Thanks to the great ministry of the Holy Spirit through John Livingston when on a Monday evening the Spirit of God moved mightily and hundreds were converted.

[30 : 01] And so I believe it's accepted that from that time the Monday thanksgiving have become part and parcel of our church life. There was reason to give thanks particularly to God at that time.

And so while we should always give thanks to God, are there not particular times? Can you not think of them? Times that you mustn't let pass, that you mustn't wait until there's a particular thanksgiving service arranged by the church or a harvest thanksgiving.

But times in your own experience when there and then you must raise your heart in gratitude to God. Times perhaps when because of special evidence of his favor you desire to make that known, perhaps a special offering to the work of God, perhaps a special testimony in some way or other to God's people or to others.

Let us give thanks to God that he gives such evidences of his favor and let us not be found wanting in the giving of our thanks when he calls for it and expects it.

And finally, let's notice the prayer of thanksgiving. Now I'm not thinking here of the location, the fact that it was when Jesus was passing through the midst of Samaria and Galilee, I'm thinking rather of it in this light.

[31 : 34] Where did the thanksgiving come from, where from, and where or what did it lead to? Now we've already seen that the thanksgiving stemmed from blessings received.

But I'd like us to notice particularly verse 19, when our Lord says to the man who was healed, Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole.

There was something in this man's experience that was not present in the experience of the others. They were healed. Their bodies were healed. They were away rejoicing.

But this man, according to our Lord, he had something more. His faith had made him whole. There was a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that the others knew nothing of.

Their bodies were healed, but this man, his soul was healed. And so there's an evidence that faith entered in, faith, the gracious gift of God, which points to this man being linked to Jesus Christ.

[32 : 42] And so, his thanksgiving, where did it come from? Not merely from the gifts. You see, the others, they received a gift of God.

that of healing. But this man, he not only received the gift, but he was personally related with the giver. And so there was cause for thanksgiving.

And the closer the relationship of the child of God with the gracious giver of all the gifts, the greater will be the thanks that we will offer.

Do you want to feel more thankful? Well, certainly let us reflect on all God's gifts. But let us above all else seek a closer walk with God, the giver of these gifts.

And then finally, we see there where from came from faith. But let's ask this, where did it lead to? And you notice our Lord's words, thy faith hath made thee whole, or thy faith hath saved thee.

[33 : 50] he received far more than the other nine. He received salvation for which he gave thanks. And you can be perfectly sure that as he gave thanks then, he received greater cause for greater thanks.

And so it went on. His thanksgiving led to greater blessing and to greater thanks. someone has said that he who forgets to be thankful may one day find himself with nothing to be thankful for.

I think the opposite is true as well. The more we praise God, the more cause we will have to praise him. The more we thank him, the more we will have for which to be thankful.

My dear friends, as this communion season draws to a close, you and I have much cause to thank God. Let us not fail in being thankful.

And if we are, then surely God is saying, you'll have more and more for which to be thankful. The blessings will abound as with this man, we fall down before him, giving him our thanks.

[35 : 10] Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we do give thee thanks, and we pray that we would do so not merely with these words upon our lips, not merely as a formula that we utter in our prayers, but O that we would give thee thanks with our lives, conscious of how much we owe, and conscious that our whole lifetime will not be enough to express all our thanks to thee.

We do come to with confession, confession that there are many times when we should be thankful, but we find our hearts so hard, so indifferent.

We may utter words, but we know if we are honest with ourselves that we are not truly thankful, so we come to thee and pray that thou will touch these hard hearts of ours, that thou will soften them, so that we would truly sense the greatness of thy mercy and love to us, and that it would be the delight of our lives to give thee our thanks.

Continue with us as we sing our parting psalm of thanksgiving and of praise. May thy people in this place go from strength to strength, experiencing more and more of the abundance of thy mercy and thy blessing in their individual lives and in the congregation.

For Jesus sake, Amen.