

February 2, 2014
By Wayne J. Schneider - Soli Deo Gloria

Thank You
St. Luke 17:11-19

Last week one of you apologetically mentioned that you have been meaning to write me a thank-you note about something, and given our Gospel reading about the grateful leper who came back and thanked Jesus, I began thinking about what a terrible thank-you note writer I am. Not for lack of trying on my mom's part, I mean, Donice did everything she could.

And, like every other kid who received a 5-dollar bill in their birthday card, I was expected to send a thank you note to Grandma, But it never felt like a natural outpouring of my gratitude. It felt like an obligation. An obligation I sometimes would gladly give \$5 to get out of.

The very worst thank you note writing experience I ever had was when the church gave us a baby shower when we were expecting our 1st child Matthew, and we received a large hardback book, some kind of comprehensive guide to Christian parenting published by Focus on the Family. 12 different people pitched in for this. Which, you guessed it, meant 12 thank you notes for a Focus on the Family book. Just shoot me.

So yeah, there have been times in my life I've not been so grateful that it naturally flowed into a note to someone.

But our text for today tells of a leper who Jesus heals returning to praise God and give thanks to Jesus. And this week as I thought about the grateful Leper, I began to realize that perhaps I do not praise God as I should.

It is so much easier for me to long for what I want; to resent what I have lost than it is for me to be thankful for what I have. I'm not alone. I mean when is the last time you heard a newscaster say "not a single school shooting in America this week. Praise God." Or "The nation is grateful this week for all the successful cancer treatments that have left thousands of people with a clean bill of health." We generally don't find a lack of trauma to be worthy of comment, much less to be worthy of gratitude.

I wrote page upon page this week about what praise is and what it is not. How praising God isn't just stroking God's ego, sycophantically telling God how awesome God is, as though God has low self-esteem and created us for just this purpose. How thankfulness is not an obligation like the thank-you note to Grandma was, but is an act of freedom that doubles the joy of what was received.

I mean, seriously, I had pages and pages of exposition on praise and thanksgiving. And not a single word of actual praise and thanksgiving and that felt telling to me somehow.

So rather than talk about praise, I thought that what I really needed this week on a spiritual level was to actually praise God. But you are totally free to listen in.

V. 11 - On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee.

That you, O God, are one who comes to us in the regions between the un-categorizable spaces that we often fail to notice or we fear altogether. I thank you. Thank you for those who bring water in the desert danger of border crossings. Thank you for the space between my wakefulness and sleep where what I foolishly call intuition kicks in.

As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, V. 12 - "*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!*"

For your approachability in Jesus, O God, I give you thanks. Thank you for coming to us in the most vulnerable way possible - contained in human skin. Thank you for revealing your glory in the person of Jesus Christ whom lepers approach.

v. 14 - When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests. "

That you see me O God, I give you thanks. Thank you for seeing that which I try to hide. Thank you for seeing my hurt and my fear. Thank you for seeing my heart and my humor. Thank you for seeing that I am stronger than I think and that I am also not nearly as strong as I think. Thank you for seeing this broken world in all it's beauty, and most especially thank you for seeing all of these things and then responding in nothing but completely crazy love.

And as they went, they were made clean.

That healing happens in community, O God, I praise you. Thank you for the way in which you bring your people together to be healed. For the ways in which we harm each other instead, forgive us.

V. 15 - Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice.

Praise you God for the ones who turn back. Thank you for all the people in my life who speak your name, who bravely point to you as the source and ground of all goodness, who dare to recognize you as God and who remind me that you are real, and you are actively redeeming me and them and all of creation.

V. 16 - He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. 17 - Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? 18 - Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? "

Blessed be God the Word who came to his own and his own received him not for in this way, God glorifies the stranger. Thank you for revealing yourself in the foreigner. I think. I mean, it's one of the less comfortable aspects of following you, Jesus. But thank you for loving me too much to allow me to stay comfortable for too long. Thank you I for interrupting my pride and refusing to leave me as is. It's uncomfortable as hell but in your faithfulness you always lead me through death to more abundant life.

19 - Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

For all the things that in going on my way I have failed to even notice I give you thanks today. Thank you for friends who email me back. Thank you for coffee. Thank you for the friend who reminded me that when in doubt just say "Thy Will be Done," because I totally had forgotten about that part.

Thank you for clean water and safe roads and electricity and garbage pick-up. Thank you for babies. Thank you for never leaving me. Thank you for all the people who manage to make me laugh. Thank you for creating us to sing. Thank

you for the fact that I didn't have to get on an airplane this week. Thank you for my dogs.

Thank you for the way in which I am fed at your table of grace, and for allowing me to speak behind it and tell the story of the night you were betrayed.

Thank you for giving me one more day to sing your praise. And for every other gift I am too blind to see that totally comes from you, Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Alleluia. Amen.