

Sermon - Thanksgiving Eve - Nov. 24th, 2024

Text: Luke 17:11-19

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen

GIVE THANKS TO GOD FOR LAND, PEOPLE, AND SALVATION

On this day, we take a moment to gather before the Lord of the Harvest; the God of our forefathers and the Almighty One who was and is and is to come; in order to offer thanksgiving to Him. Our readings this evening give direction to our thanksgiving. Our Old Testament reading from Deuteronomy speaks of a land full of blessings for the one who keeps the commandments of the Lord, in response to the good land we have been given, the Lord says in v.10 **“you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land He has given you.”** All the Earth is the Lord’s handiwork and it is His mighty right hand that brings forth the fruits of the ground in abundance for us to eat. So let us bless the Lord for the good land He that He has given us access to so that we may have abundance of produce almost year round our stores and supermarkets.

Likewise, the Lord directs our thanksgiving once again in our Epistle reading from Paul’s first letter to Timothy toward a thanksgiving for all people whom God has placed in our lives. St. Paul writes, **“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and**

thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions,” So then, along with our constant prayers for all the people whom God has placed in our lives, thanksgiving is added to the list. Think about it... If you were to pray for all people in your lives, or if you were to ask God for something on behalf of another person in your life, or if you were to ask the Lord to have mercy on that person, or, finally, if you were to give thanks to God for all people in your life; then how do you think your perspective of others would change? Don't you think it would be more difficult to become irritated with those people, or don't you think it would be a struggle for you to not love that person.

Let us give thanks to God for all people in our lives this Thanksgiving, for when we do, Paul writes that we will “**...lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.**” When we give thanks for the people in our lives and even for our governing officials at the local, state, and national level, we begin to view those people through the lens that God uses. He sees all people as a creation whom He loves and

whom He desires to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. When you view others in this way, your desires begin to align with God's desires so that you desire that person to be saved and you begin to play an active role in helping them come to the knowledge of the truth.

The last example of The Lord directing our thanksgiving comes from the Gospel reading. This reading begins with the 3rd announcement in Luke's Gospel that Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem, and on His way as He passed through the middle of Galilee and Samaria. Jesus entered a village that is unnamed and He is met by ten men who had leprosy who stood far off yet within ear shot and they lifted up their voices to Jesus, but they did not ask what the leper asks in Luke 5 that they should be made clean. Instead, their voices are raised with this request, **"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."** (Luke 17:13) They ask for mercy and not for cleansing or healing. Their request is geared toward spiritual healing; namely for salvation, and Jesus when He saw them said to them, **"Go show yourselves to the priest."** In Luke 5, He told that leper to show himself to the priest so that the Law of Moses might be fulfilled, and during their journey to see the priest who would

be in Jerusalem at the Temple, the ten men with leprosy were healed.

Then an anonymous one is pointed out as he saw that **“he was healed and he turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving Him thanks.”** This leper was the only one of the ten to return to Jesus, He praised God with a loud voice, and then we see that his praise and thanksgiving are directed to Jesus who is truly God with us, the great Immanuel as we see this man fall on his face at Jesus’ feet as this man rightly finds the great high priest who is making His way to Jerusalem to make the atoning sacrifice which would cleanse all the people in the whole world. So this man gives thanks to Jesus in a moment that cannot be found anywhere else in the entire New Testament that a man directs his Thanksgiving to Jesus.

This man was no Israelite either. He was an outsider. He was a Samaritan. He was unclean in every sense of the word, yet The Lord truly had mercy on him and said, **“Rise and go your way; your faith has saved you.”** The translation we see says, “your faith has made you well.” Yet, I wanted you all to see what marvelous wellness this man received. The word used is σωζω which means “to save” so he was not

only made well physically, but the wellness was also a spiritual wellness doing double duty just as we speak of the Lord's Supper after you receive the true body and blood of Christ given and shed for you. So the pastor says, "Now may this true body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, strengthen and keep you in body and soul unto life everlasting." The healing and salvation which our Lord gives is not limited to our souls, but it is for our whole selves body and soul.

So our Lord urges you who are like the Samaritan leper, full of uncleannesses to go to where the priest is. Our great high priest is found where the two or three are gathered. Go to that place and show yourself to the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. Let the Samaritan leper be your example as you fall down at the feet of Jesus Christ who was sacrificed on the cross so that you have the mercy your soul longs for; sins forgiven, life, salvation, and assurance of the resurrection of the body. Then, having your body and soul enlightened and strengthened by His gifts, you are set in motion like this Samaritan man who was told, "**Rise and go your way.**" His way is the only way to salvation, for apart from Jesus there is no salvation. The way of Jesus leads to Jerusalem and from

Jerusalem to the cross and from the cross to the grave from the grave to the skies ascended on high.

Therefore, let us this day and always give thanks for the abundance of the land, for the people whom God placed into our lives, and for the salvation that our Lord has won for us on the cross. Let us give thanks unto Lord, for He is truly good and mercies endure forever. Amen.