

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

Luke 17:11-21

Take some time to make a list of what you're thankful/grateful for...and be as specific as possible.

How do you express your thankfulness/gratitude? What does that look like for you?

At the heart of worship, at its very core and foundation, is thankfulness/gratitude. This is where we start, and this is where we stay, when it comes to growing as a Christian.

Sadly, in our world today, thankfulness/gratitude is often just given lip-serve (if even that). Rather, there is a more general sense of expectation and entitlement that pervades our culture.

N.T. Wright asks this question, ***“What would make you shout for joy at the top of your voice? What would make you fall to the ground—yes, flat on your face!—in front of someone?”***

Asking such a question helps us grasp the magnitude of the relief, the new lease on life, the now-former leper was experiencing. Unless we've dealt with something as dreadful as leprosy, it may be hard for us to really feel what this man felt...but that shouldn't keep us from trying to imagine it. What would it take for us to be that demonstrably grateful? Or, perhaps another way of looking at it, do we fully grasp the magnitude of what we have been saved from and saved for?

While the text does not specifically state that the other 9 healed lepers were Jewish, it is sort of implied. Luke, more than any of the other Gospel writers, highlights the marginalized. He goes out of his way to show how Jesus was/is for the outlier. The irony is that “Jews” derive that label from their predecessor Judah, which means “praise”. While that may seem like a simple little piece of trivia, name sakes, and living into/up to them is important. For example, we are called “Christians”. That means literally “little Christs”, or broader, “followers of Christ”. Do we exemplify that? When people look at Christians do they see good imitations of Jesus?

In the sermon yesterday, we went a little further into the text than where the natural break is (verse 19). But there is a natural connection between the two sections. Jesus said, *“...the kingdom of God is among you.”* (vs 21b). Or to say it another way, “the reign/rule of God is in your midst.” Throughout the entirety of Jesus' ministry, He went about saying such things. The present reality of the Kingdom of God framed everything He said and did. The fact is, He—the King—was present, thus so was His Kingdom. Additionally, the scene with the lepers (as well as all His miracles and healings) was evidence of His Kingdom's presence and the effectuality of His rule. And, we also see throughout His ministry that Jesus regularly received worship—which is something only God can/should do. Jesus accepted such praise and worship as a matter of course because He is the Divine King.

Beyond that fact that His Kingdom is about making all things new (as represented by the healing of the lepers), His Kingdom is open to all (as represented by the Samaritan). Those who are

“privileged” in this world, and those who are “down-and-out” by worldly standards, suddenly find themselves on equal footing in God’s Kingdom.

What else can we learn about God’s Kingdom from this passage? Notice what the lepers cried out to Jesus, “*Jesus, Master, have pity on us!*” And, of course, He did have pity on them, because the “culture” of the Kingdom is one of mercy (remember: “*Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy.*”).

I wonder if we regularly recognize our pitiful state? Is it even possible to have a proper relationship with Jesus without coming to a point of recognizing our great need for mercy? Most people, I suspect, try to ignore this need, or somehow try to compensate for this need, or just superficially gloss over this need. This brings us back to giving Him praise, worship, and thanks. If we don’t recognize what has been done for us, how can we truly offer Him “a sacrifice of praise”?

An important question/thought for us to consider is whether the Church looks like a “little piece of heaven” here on earth. The Church, rightly understood, is a society that lives out the reign/rule of God in this world. “*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*”, is not only our foundational prayer and mantra, but should have some flesh on it via the Church.

Attached to this week’s email you will find an excerpt from George Eldon Ladd’s “The Gospel of the Kingdom” if you’d like to take a deeper dive into some Kingdom theology. (It’s long but good.)

Describe a time when someone expressed genuine thankfulness to you. Describe a time when you experienced a lack of gratitude from someone. How did that make you feel and how did you respond?

How has Jesus shown mercy/pity to you? (Ideally, the more specific the better.) In what ways does that continue to affect your relationship with Him?

How have you seen the Church represent the mercy of Jesus and His Kingdom?

Isn’t it interesting to think how we, both at the same time, ought to reflect the worship, praise, thanks of the leper, and reflect the mercy of Jesus to others? Which do you think you do better? Which do you think the Church does better?

Or those of us who attend worship services on a weekly basis, and have done so for a long time, it can be challenging at times to get our hearts into praising, worshipping, thanking week in and week out. How have you experienced that challenge and what do you do to overcome that?

In I Thessalonians 5:16-17 we read, “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Why do you think that is so important? And how can we help each other do that?

Something that is easy to miss in this passage is the little detail, “...Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.” (vs 11). One way this can be understood is that Jesus was in “the bad/undesirable part of town”. How do you/we put ourselves in places where we can see/experience the in-breaking of God’s Kingdom?