

# Truly Thankful, or Forgetting Jesus?

## Luke 17:11-19

How would you describe what your witness as a disciple of Jesus is and looks like, for what he has done for you? When you leave here today, what will people see in you? What will they hear?

Jesus says in Acts 1:8, "When the Holy Spirit comes to you, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and further in all Judea and Samaria and even to the very ends of the earth."

What does Jesus see in you and me?

What does Jesus see as our witness together, for what Christ has done for us?

This is a big question for me as the Assistant Bishop of our church, as the Pastors of the LCA come together this

### ACTS 1:8

Jesus said..

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in **Jerusalem**, and in all **Judea** and **Samaria**, and to the **ends of the earth**."



week for a most important conference. We're meeting in the same town where 56 years earlier the LCA was born. Two former churches at loggerheads came together as one, and the people witnessed by giving thanks to God.

What is the witness of God's people today?

The gospel text today speaks to us.

Let's pray....

In our gospel reading, we meet Jesus on the way to Jerusalem. He's been on the way to Jerusalem for some time. We heard in Luke 9:51, "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem."

He's getting close now as we meet him, and are met by him, in Luke 17.

He's travelling the border country between Galilee and Samaria.



Jesus is in the

margins

among very different people.

Along the way, he's been teaching and proclaiming the God of sheer amazing grace (with the parable of the Lost Son and his welcoming, celebrating Father).



The world is about to fully witness this God of sheer amazing grace in the place where Jesus has set his face: in Jerusalem, the place of a cross of agony and death, in giving himself as a sacrifice for the world.

And as Jesus closes in on Jerusalem, he meets 10 people suffering from leprosy (unclean and on the outside, they still know who Jesus is, and cry out, “Master have pity on us” — and Jesus does).

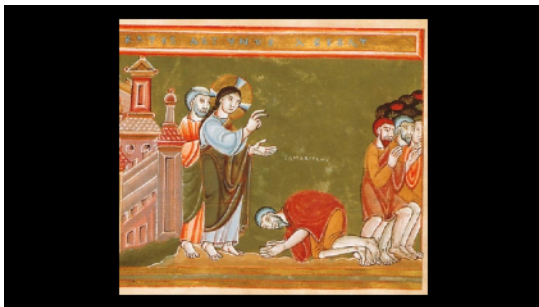
He says, “Go and show yourselves to the priests”, just like he’d said to the one with leprosy we meet earlier in the gospel in chapter 5. In faith they go, and as they go they are cleansed.



What will be their witness?

Well, one of them on the way notices he is cleansed, and turns back to Jesus, prostrating himself at Jesus’ feet, praising God and giving thanks (using the same words of thanksgiving used by Jesus when he was instituting the Lord’s Supper).

Jesus says, “Weren’t 10 healed? Where are the others? Only one has returned, and he’s a Samaritan! Go on your way — your faith has made you well.”



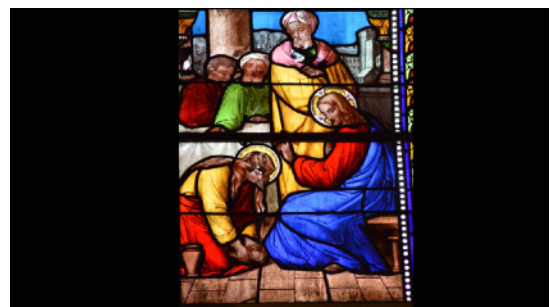
There’s a sharp contrast in the responses, between the witness of the one who returns and worships at Jesus’ feet with thanks, and of the nine who do not.

The world will fully understand the sheer grace of God soon afterwards, when the Son of God will be betrayed, beaten, and will give his life on a cross in Jerusalem, for the payment and healing of the world for the curse of sin. What is the response of those who hear the good news?

What is your response? What is our response?

In Luke’s gospel, the response of faith is often found and highlighted in the those who receive much:

- Luke 7:50 — Jesus says, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace” to a sinful woman who wiped Jesus’ feet with her tears, and extravagantly poured expensive perfume on them, anointing Jesus. This woman is forgiven. And Jesus notes, “The one who has been given much also loves greatly. Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”



•Luke 8:48

— Jesus says, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace” to the woman who had been subject to bleeding for 12 long years of hard separation labour, and who in faith reaches out to touch and to be touched by Jesus. She sits trembling at Jesus’ feet, and hears Jesus say to her, “Daughter your faith has healed you. Go in peace.”



- Luke 18:42 — Jesus says, “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you” to the blind man by the side of the road who cries out, “Lord have mercy.” He follows Jesus, praising God, and all the people do the same. What a witness!

What is our witness to the healing love and grace of Jesus for us?

This year, my wife Sue was diagnosed with breast cancer. She underwent major surgery, and for each step along the way, I was thanking God. I thank God today that she’s doing ok. She/we have received much. I’ve never thanked God so much in my life, I think. But in my thankfulness, it also brought pause for me to recognise that, in so much of my life, my witness is less of thanksgiving (and I’ve started studying the many, many texts in Scripture calling us to give thanks, including our wedding text from 39 years ago which I preached on last Sunday. Colossians 3 calls for thanks to be given on at least three occasions in just 5 few short verses.) My life is often so full that I find myself resembling less the one who gave thanks, and more the nine who do not. I’m doing my duty (which is what the 9 who go to the priest do); and not recognising God at work in my life.

How about you?

The struggle that life (and particularly life in public ministry) can bring:

- The struggle of seeing COVID and whatever else has so affected worship attendance. Please invite people.
- Frustration and anger at what I can’t achieve, or things that someone else stops me from doing.
- Focusing on the negative and on the people who disagree with me.
- Focusing on what I haven’t got, rather than the abundance of blessing I have.
- The struggle we face in this land of our society continuing the trend of turning its back on the one true God.
- The struggle of our church; where we have sought to study faithfully the Word and put ourselves under the authority of God and his Word in prayerful reflection on the matter of ordination; and yet find ourselves in two very distinct places of understanding; divided.
- The struggle of life where sin still invades; where you and I still sin, as described by Paul in Romans 7. Why do I do what I don’t want to do? Why do I repeat it?

It seems to me that you and I, that we have much need of God’s mercy and grace today, and so we stand with those ten who cry, “Lord, have mercy on us!”

We join the 10 men suffering from leprosy: “Lord, have pity on us!” and stand in their midst with the apostle Paul in Romans 7 crying, “Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?”

and with Paul what is our witness? What is my witness, your witness, our shared witness?

“Thanks. Thanks be to God who delivers me from this body of death.”

It is perhaps in the recognition of this spiritual reality with Paul, that we too recognise the magnitude of the sheer gift of grace we receive.

In the Eucharist today, God sees us both in all the



fullness of the dark places of our hearts, but also through the lens of his Son. We'll hear, "Our Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took break, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take and eat. This is my body given for you. This is my blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."

And together we shall receive the healing of God again, and anew, and assured in the meal of sheer grace.

And we'll pray together, "We thank you Lord for this healing gift..." — the prayer we might pray every Sunday in public worship, and which we share with people in their homes and in hospitals. What a gift we receive. What a witness of thanks we can share.

On Reformation Sunday, in a few weeks' time on October 30, we are planning a special day where we worship as one in one morning service. I'm keen to see our witness as a reforming Church to be one of a community who give thanks to God. Please consider if you can come and be a part of this service and the activities and thanksgiving lunch together.

For Jesus comes amongst us, full of healing grace, and goes with us to the people he prepares for us to bring the healing balm of the gospel. Let our shared witness be one of thanks for the healing we have received, and the good news we have to share. So go on your way, the Son of God has saved you, and the Spirit has given you saving faith to share your witness of thanks. Amen.



*Video of the service including the above address: <https://youtu.be/V3SkUTSEDt8>*