

The Reverend Theo Robinson's Sermon for October 11, 2026

Luke 17:11-19 - "Living a Eucharistic Life"

May only truth be spoken and truth heard. Amen.

Today is Thanksgiving Sunday. Maybe some of us will be celebrating with family, eating way too much food, perhaps football will be on the television. But, following up on last week's discussion on truth and reconciliation, as well as the Truth About Cowichan event on September 30, there is a dark history to Thanksgiving in Canada.

Celebrating the harvest was always an important event for Indigenous people. It was a time to give thanks to nature's bounty and for the health of the community. First Nations across Turtle Island have traditions of thanksgiving for surviving winter and for receiving crops and game as a reward for their hard work. These traditions may include feasting, prayer, dance, potlatch, and other ceremonies, depending on the community.

When European settlers began coming to Turtle Island, Indigenous people saved them from starvation by sharing their food and their knowledge of survival on the vast lands of trees, water, and wild weather. Without having learned skills in planting, hunting, and fishing, the colonialists would have surely died. In return, the following year those same colonialists burned and murdered the Indigenous people. Not a great way to say thank you.

It's easy to see why many people feel a little ambivalent to this holiday. Don't get me wrong. I like a good turkey dinner with all the fixings just as much as the next guy. But it sure is hard to be thankful around a table full of food when you know the history of the holiday and you consider what's happening all around the world, and especially in our own backyards.

Wouldn't lament be more appropriate? Or a cry for justice? Or a call to action?

Certainly, these are also possibilities and have their time and place. But for just this moment, and given today's reading, I am reminded that of all of our responses to events, blessed or challenging, great or small, one of the most powerful is that of thanksgiving.

In the passage of Luke before us we have one of many stories of Jesus healing people with whom he has no business interacting. Ten men approach him, unclean and outcast, pleading with Jesus to heal them. Which, of course, he did. All these men would have been quite surprised to find themselves healed. Perhaps some were overjoyed. Perhaps some celebrated. Perhaps others ran to tell their family and friends. Perhaps a few even took it for granted. We don't know what happened to nine of the men, but we know that only one returned to thank Jesus for curing him. Only one decided to actually express his gratitude to Jesus and to God.

Were all ten lepers healed? Yes. Were they all saved? Yes, in the sense that they were rescued from their disease. But not in the sense of drawing close to God in thankfulness and appreciation. The nine were saved physically but not spiritually.

Our natural response here would be to rebuke those nine men who ran off without even a slight word of thanks. But consider this. The other nine did nothing wrong. In fact, they did exactly as they were told and presumably also enjoyed being healed. Again, they didn't do anything wrong and received the blessing promised them. So, what does the man who returned receive? Certainly, the blessing of healing, as did the other nine. But also the blessing that comes from recognizing blessing and giving thanks — the blessings, that is, of wholeness and even salvation.

Returning to God and giving thanks and praise is central to our faith. When we read this account of the ten lepers, we can't help but be drawn to our central liturgical eucharistic prayer. "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give our thanks and praise. It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God." This Eucharistic prayer is like our weekly dose of gratitude. The words of the prayer are meant to characterize every part of our Christian living – our mundane, trivial, ordinary, everyday life. It's our duty to show ourselves grateful to God with our whole life. The words of the Great Thanksgiving calls us to live Eucharistic lives.

But what does it mean to live a Eucharistic life? It means loving others. After hearing stories of how Jesus showed love to others, we try to show God's love to everyone we meet. It is easy to show love to the people who are nice to us, but it is very hard to be nice to the people who we find hard to love. This is exactly what Jesus asks us to do!

It means looking after creation. God has made so many beautiful things for us that we need to make sure we look after them. God wants us to look after the people, the animals, the plants, and everything else in creation. It means caring for those in need. Jesus taught us to care for others who have less than we do. We can do this through prayer and through giving to places like the local food bank.

It means announcing the Gospel. God wants us to be evangelists! At the end of each service, we are sent out into the world to take what we have learned through the readings and prayers and live like Jesus and show God's love to people in our daily lives. It means to do your best. Even when it was really hard, Jesus always did his best to do what he knew God wanted. He often prayed to God to give him the strength he needed to do what was right.

It means to help, share, and show kindness. Through his life, Jesus was always aware of people who needed his help. We too, need to always be ready to help others. Another way of showing God's love to others is by sharing. There were many times when Jesus shared with others. And we can show kindness to other people, especially people who others are not kind to.

This world is full of blessing and challenges. Which will we focus on? Truth be told, there is a time for lament and cries for justice and activism. But given that we live in a culture filled with blame and accusation and almost devoid of thanksgiving, maybe on this day, and remembering the tenth leper, we can go forth to be heralds of blessing and bearers of powerful words of gratitude and to live the Eucharistic life to which we are called.

Amen.