

Faith and Thanks

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- [0 : 00] Morning. I'm very sorry I can't be with you in person this morning, particularly for our Thanksgiving Sunday today.
- As you've heard, I've tested positive to COVID. And so for your sake, it's best that I don't join you in person. And for those using the lectern after me, don't worry, it will be sprayed with the COVID killer.
- And so it will all be sanitized and safe for you later. Well, let's get started. If you could open your Bibles back to Luke chapter 17, please.
- And there's an outline in your bulletins you might find helpful. Well, I think I've mentioned that in our family of five, we now have five who are driving.
- Those two are on their learners. And one of those on their learners asked me recently, Dad, do you think I'm doing okay? You know, that is driving. To which I replied, you're a great driver.
- [1 : 03] And then they said, well, can I drive your car? I feel like I was just set up, right? But I replied, well, mum's car is way better. And I gave them the keys to Michelle's car.
- But the point is, my actions exposed my level of faith in their driving ability, didn't they? And today we'll see the actions of some lepers, those who don't give thanks and one who does, which expose the level of their faith in Jesus.
- But first, we see Jesus' actions. Point one, verse one. Now, on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.
- Here we are reminded that Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. Back in chapter nine, this was the turning point in Luke's gospel, where it says, at that time, as the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.
- Why did he do that? Well, to die. It says, as the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven. That is to go and die on a cross, rise and ascend.
- [2 : 25] You see, it's by dying in Jerusalem that he would save us from our sins, that he would be our saviour. I remember an angel announced at his birth, back in chapter two, verse 11, that Jesus is our saviour.
- And this saviour would be the Messiah, the Christ, the King or Lord. In other words, Jesus is King and saviour.
- And he would save us from the judgment our sins deserve by taking that judgment in our place on the cross. That's why he was on his way to Jerusalem.
- But he doesn't take the direct route to Jerusalem. Here is a map. A direct route would have been just heading straight south through Samaria down to Jerusalem in the south.
- In fact, back in chapter 10, he's actually already been to Bethany, which is right next door to Jerusalem. So it's like he's setting out for Melbourne City.
- [3 : 32] Then he travels to Richmond. And then he comes back out to Croydon and then goes down to Wontana, all on his way to the city.

It's a rather roundabout way, isn't it? Why does he do this? Well, because he wants to preach in as many towns as possible.

And that's what we're told earlier in the gospel. He says in chapter 4 that he must proclaim the good news to other towns also. And then after that turning point in chapter 9, where he's resolutely set out for Jerusalem, and we're told in chapter 13 that Jesus went through the towns and villages teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem.

You see, for Jesus' death to be effective for people, they need to hear the good news of the kingdom, that he is the king, the Messiah, and have faith in him.

That's why he's taking the long way around, so that he can preach to as many towns as possible on the way, that as many people might hear of him along the way and put their faith in him.

[4 : 48] For it's only by faith in Jesus that his death becomes effective for us, that we are saved from sin's judgment.

And that's what the actions of the lepers now show. Point 2, verse 12. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him.

They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, Jesus, Master, have pity on us. Here Jesus is seen by ten men with leprosy.

And it's no surprise we meet people like this on the fringes of society. You know, on the border between Galilee and Samaria.

Because that's what sickness does, doesn't it? Sickness isolates you from society. I mean, if we're sick, we stay at home, don't we? Or we have to pre-record a sermon like this, don't we?

[5 : 49] We withdraw ourselves from society. Although for the Jews, the law demanded it. And so the Old Testament law said, He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease.

He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp. And so, I'd be unclean.

Now, the Old Testament law was given for the good of the community. It helped make sure leprosy didn't spread. But it also reminded the Jews that God was so pure that anything impure could not come near to him.

Not people who had been touched by the effects of a sinful world like disease and death. And certainly not people who were sinful themselves.

Unless they are cleansed and forgiven. And so this law explains why these ten lepers lived on the fringes of society, on the border.

[6 : 57] Away from their community and away from God. And it explains why they didn't come near to Jesus but cried out to Jesus from a distance. It seems they had heard of him healing others and they believed Jesus could heal them.

And so they cried out for pity or literally mercy from him. They're desperate, aren't they? Desperate to be healed so they can have life again.

Life in community and life with God. And God wants this for them. Which is why Jesus gives it to them. See verse 14.

When he saw them, he said, Go. Go show yourselves to the priests. And as they went, they were cleansed.

Jesus sends them off to the priests. And as they go, they are cleansed. No more unclean. By the way, the law also said in Leviticus that the priests were the ones who had to declare them clean and free to enter life with, you know, in their community and life with God.

[8 : 13] But notice it was on their way that they were cleansed. And so they obeyed Jesus even before they were healed by Jesus.

In other words, their actions showed they did have some faith in Jesus, didn't they? Indeed, they even called him Master.

But it seems their faith in Jesus was only as a master of healing. Like, you know, how today we have a professor of cardiology or something like that.

An expert in their field. They don't seem to believe or have faith that he is the Messiah or King who saves. It seems to be a superficial faith rather than a saving faith.

How do we know? Well, because their lack of any further action is now contrasted with the Samaritan. Point three, verse 15.

[9 : 17] One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him.

And he was a Samaritan. Here, one of the ten, turns back praising God because he recognizes that Jesus is the one whom God has used to heal him.

Such that he can now come near to Jesus, did you notice? No longer standing at a distance. But he does more than that, doesn't he? He then falls at Jesus' feet and thanks Jesus.

These actions show he believes Jesus is much more than a master of leprosy. More than a professor of leprosy, if you like. But that he is the Messiah or the King who saves.

And Luke adds that this man was a Samaritan, which would have shocked Luke's Jewish readers. You see, remember, Galilee is in the north and that was occupied by Jews, was Jewish.

[10 : 27] Judea is in the south and that was Jewish as well. But Samaria is in the middle. And then it was made up of Jews who intermarried with other nationalities. And so they became half-Jews or half-breeds in the Jews' eyes.

And so for many Jews, they were despised. It's kind of like, think Queensland and Victoria as the pure and then New South Wales in the middle as the half-breeds.

I can say this because I'm from New South Wales. It's okay. But the point is, this mention of the Samaritan at the end of verse 16 would have shocked Luke's Jewish readers, perhaps to provoke them not to be outdone by this Samaritan, to realise if this Samaritan did this, then how much more so should they?

For this Samaritan is our model to follow. And Jesus confirms it in verse 17. Jesus asks, We're not all ten cleansed?

Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner? Then he said to him, Rise and go. Your faith has made you well.

[11 : 43] You see, by saying, where are the other nine? Jesus is saying that this one got it right. He is the model to follow.

But Jesus says even more than that. For this Samaritan's actions expose not a superficial faith, but a saving faith. In verse 19, Jesus literally says, Rise and go.

Your faith has saved you. You see, the Samaritan has a saving faith, such that he is not just cleansed from leprosy, but saved from something more serious, saved from sin.

He is able to rise, forgiven, and right with God for his actions of falling at Jesus' feet and thanking Jesus, and not just the right response to Jesus, but a recognition of Jesus as the Messiah who saves.

In other words, his actions show his faith in Jesus as King and Saviour sent by God. It's a bit like when my son Tim was little.

[13 : 05] He would jump from a step into my arms without any hesitation that I would, you know, not catch him. He would, if it was on a swing set or on a balcony or something like that, he would just kind of leap into my arms, no hesitation.

Now that he's 20, he doesn't do that anymore. I'm glad. But the point of the story is his actions showed his faith in me as someone strong enough to catch him.

And this Samaritan's actions show his faith in Jesus as the Messiah who is strong enough to save him. This is what Jesus affirms by saying your faith has saved you.

Interestingly, Jesus calls him not Samaritan but foreigner perhaps to show that his saving faith that is this saving faith is possible not just for Jews and Samaritans but for all people.

Foreigners even like us here in Melbourne. And so the question for us is are we like the Samaritan? At one level we already are, aren't we?

[14 : 16] Because we all need not cleansing from leprosy but saving from sin which as I said is much more serious because it leads us into eternal judgment.

Hell. But we know more than the Samaritan. We know that Jesus did make it to Jerusalem. He did die on the cross. He did take the punishment for our sins and so by his blood we can be forgiven and saved.

if we can spiritually rise and be right with God join part of the community of God if we rightly recognize Jesus for who he is.

And so do you? Have you like the Samaritan rightly recognized Jesus as the king?

The one God sent to pay for your sins at the cross? Simply put do you have faith in Jesus as your king and saviour? And for us who already do then are we like the Samaritan and are we rightly responding to Jesus like he did by falling at his feet not literally of course but metaphorically in our lives by following him as our king king of our whole lives at living his way and following his commands like loving one another like meeting each Sunday together like pleasing him above all others?

[15 : 57] Are we responding like the Samaritan by falling at his feet in life? And are we responding like the Samaritan who praise God and thank Jesus for life?

Do we thank Jesus for being born into this messed up world for us? For dying on a cross and suffering hell for us?

For sticking through life's ups and downs with us? And are we praising God for Jesus and everything else he's given us?

will we thank God today even? And so will we be like the Samaritan who rightly responds to Jesus falling at his feet in life and thanking him for life?

In fact the order of events in this passage highlights how our actions expose the kind of faith we have doesn't it? Remember the Samaritan fell at Jesus' feet and thanked him first?

[17 : 07] Then based on those actions Jesus declared his faith and saved him. You see this passage highlights how actions expose the kind of faith we have and so another way to put it is what do our actions show about our faith?

My actions with one of my kids who was wanting to drive my car exposed the level of faith in their driving ability but I still gave them the keys to Michelle's car so I still had some level of faith in their ability but if I had complete faith in their driving ability a saving faith so to speak I would have given them the keys to my car wouldn't I?

Well in a similar way do our actions suggest our faith is superficial like the other nine do we perhaps only give Jesus the keys to parts of our life and not our whole life or do we perhaps thank God on Sundays but forget God all the other days or do our actions show that we have a saving faith like the Samaritan where we fall at Jesus' feet giving him the keys to our whole life and continuing to thank him for life well let's pray that we show our saving faith by doing both let's pray our gracious father we do thank you for this reminder this morning about both recognizing Jesus for who he is and rightly responding to Jesus in life help us we pray as those who have rightly recognized him already to keep responding to him by falling at his feet in life and by continuing to thank him for life we ask it in his name

Amen