

## The Ten Lepers

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by Oscar Miles

*Derived from a sermon on Thanksgiving, Luke 17:11-19.*

Thanksgiving Day, a national holiday set aside to give thanks, is soon to be upon us. It is certainly one of my favorite holidays, for one thing, because it is not so commercialized as the others. For another, it is a family time. I hope you enjoy your Thanksgiving meal, but please don't overdo it. Remember, your goal is to enjoy your meal, not to be entered in the Butterball Hall of Fame! Gluttony is not your patriotic duty, and certainly Christian temperance would encourage moderation. However, do have an extra helping you wouldn't have on an ordinary day, but remember to give thanks to all to whom thanks is due.

One wonders in such a secular society, **WHO** is the one being thanked today? God? Man? Self? Society? Christians need to be thankful all the time. Our lesson today is about one who is thankful, while nine others were not thankful for a great miracle that occurred in their lives.

### Leprosy

Leprosy is a loathsome disease, and it seems the use of the word in the Bible includes many "*infectious skin diseases*" (NIV). Nevertheless, it was a chronic disease with severe consequences for its victim.

Under the Law of Moses (Lev. 13:1-3; 14:54-57), lepers were "unclean" as was his clothing, his house, and most all things near him. To make matters worse, in Jesus' day the Pharisees and scribes taught that anyone with leprosy was being punished for his sins! So for lepers there was not only the physical pain of the disease, but also the social isolation.

If you read Luke 17:11-19, you will notice that the Samaritan leper was traveling with the Jewish lepers, showing that society ostracized lepers to such an extent that even the enmity between the two peoples was ignored by lepers. No wonder these lepers **begged** Jesus to help them!

### Giving Thanks

Jesus healed the ten lepers, but only one was thankful! Why is it right to give thanks? True, heart-felt gratitude must be offered in humility. Sometimes we perfunctorily say "Thank you!" to people. Sometimes it certainly is simply a matter of courtesy and politeness. This is an important value to teach our children. But when we say "Thank you!" to God, it must not be merely perfunctory. It is not simply a matter of manners, or rote, or routine! It is a matter of thanking Him Who out of His unfathomable love, mercy and grace blesses you beyond what you are able to imagine.

Secondly, it glorifies God (Lk. 17:15, 18). Man has no greater calling, no greater purpose than to glorify the God in whose image we are made. But Satan tempts us to consider what we don't have, and to look at the rich and think God has left us out. Yet, remember this, the Lord gives you the opportunity to breathe, on average, eighteen times per minute, day and night. What we breathe is His gift to us (Job 12:10). Every day we breathe 26,000 times. Multiply this figure by the number of days you have lived. You will be surprised by this simple gift.

### What Ingratitude Says

Ingratitude says, "I take for granted the blessings of life" (see James 1:17). It says, "I don't appreciate the gift" (see Lk. 17:17-18). It says, "I arrogantly think I deserve the gift and will not honor the One who gave it!" (see Romans 1:21). But we must never be like the pigs who never look up to see from whence the acorns fell! If your eyes are open, you will see daily reminders of God's presence and blessings.

When you do stop to thank Him for **everything**, especially for the things we have so freely and abundantly received, then you will be thankful. There was no excuse for the nine lepers to be *thankless* to Jesus!

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