

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection

- Pastor Doug noted that, in light of all God's marvelous provision, "*Christians should be the most grateful people on the face of the Earth...yet the consistently thankful person is the exception rather than the rule.*" **Why** do you think that is?

What has helped you pull out of a phase of ingratitude in the past?

- Read Proverbs 30:7-9. Could you **honestly** see yourself praying this? **Why or why not?**

From v. 9, discern what the writer of this proverb values most in life. What is it?

How much does that matter to you—and how could that help you be more content?

- Read Luke 17:11-19. Jesus directed the lepers to **go show their healing** to the priest for his verification even **before Jesus healed them** (v. 14)! **Now that's gutsy faith!** Make a list of **promises** God has given to us Christians—**but not yet fulfilled**.

What do skeptical or sarcastic non-believers typically say about those promises?

What would be a gutsy (but respectful) response to those accusations?

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Application-Challenge

- Make it a habit to praise and thank God as consistently as you petition him.
- Make a "Robinson Crusoe List", contrasting the "good" and the "evil" of your life circumstances. It will help you put your troubles in perspective.
- Make a list of twenty-five ways that God has blessed you. Look at that list every day this week and thank God for his provision.

Take One Step: What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



Sermon Summary

Too often, those who are the most blessed are the least grateful. This is an especially sad critique for those who of us who are followers of Jesus Christ because we know from the Scriptures, that every good and perfect gift that comes our way, ultimately comes from God. Things haven't changed much in this regard in the last 2,000 years. Today, we are going to look at an instance in Jesus' ministry that revealed how hard it is to find a person with a grateful heart.

In Luke 17, we read that as Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, he entered a village and encountered ten leprous men who pleaded for Jesus to help them (vv. 11-13). To understand the desperate plight of these men, you need to know something about leprosy. In the first century, there was no cure for this disease. Because leprosy was highly infectious, Jewish law required that lepers be isolated from the rest of society (Lev. 13:45-46). It is obvious that Jesus' reputation as a miracle worker had given them hope that maybe, just maybe, he could do for them what he had done for others. Could he help them? Or would he send them away like the other Jewish rabbis had done? I suspect that in addition to being isolated from their families, lepers felt isolated from and judged by God as well.

We read in verse 14, "When He saw them, He said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And as they were going, they were cleansed." According to Old Testament law, for a leper to be readmitted to Jewish society, he had to be pronounced "clean," or cured, by a Jewish Priest. Jesus asked these ten lepers to go and get a "certificate of healing" from a Priest. But please note, he gave them this directive before they were actually healed! In other words, Jesus asked them to exercise faith. They had to begin their journey to the Priest as lepers, believing that somewhere along the way, they would be healed. They exercised faith, and were healed as a result.

Note carefully their response to this miracle: "Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan" (vv. 15-16). As a Samaritan, this man was doubly ostracized in Palestine, because Jews hated Samaritans, and vice-versa. Jews considered Samaritans to be racially and spiritually impure. That it was a Samaritan and not a Jew who returned to give thanks provides an unexpected and shocking twist to the story. "Then Jesus answered and said, 'Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they? Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?' And He said to him, 'Stand up and go; your faith has made you well'" (vv. 17-19). I would like to make three observations from this passage concerning human nature and our response to God's blessings.

[1] We are often quick to pray, but slow to give thanks. Despite our privileged position, rather than being truly grateful for the blessings we have, we too often focus on the things we want and don't have. We grumble and are envious of our neighbor.

[2] Those who have been blessed the most often tend to be the least grateful. In our text, we saw that ten men were cleansed, but only one returned to give thanks: the socially despised and lowly Samaritan. Presumably, the other nine were Jews, God's chosen people. More than anyone, else they had been the recipients of God's blessings. Yet they failed to give thanks to God for a miraculous healing. Why is that? There are many possible reasons. Let me share a couple. (a) Personal prosperity can blind us to our true neediness and dependence upon God. When our needs are met and many of our wants satisfied, we don't sense our need for God. When is the last time you asked God for your daily bread? When our cup is full—we don't sense our need for God. (b) Personal prosperity can lead to an entitlement mentality. God has blessed us, and we expect him to keep blessing us. So long as God blesses, we worship and serve him. But let the blessings cease, and watch what happens! Let adversity come our way and see how faithful we remain.

[3] Gratitude is the natural and expected response of one who has experienced God's blessings. Jesus expected all ten to return and give praise to God, because all ten were beneficiaries of his grace. Jesus is saying, "Where is their gratitude? Why didn't they return to thank God?" This is really a stinging rebuke to all of us who daily experience God's blessings, yet only rarely acknowledge the hand from whom those blessings come.

How would you describe your GQ (you "Gratitude Quotient") right now? Would those who know you best say that your daily demeanor is characterized more by griping or gratitude? Does your focus tend to be more on what you have or on what you want and don't have? Do you see the good things in your life as blessings or as entitlements? Let's meditate on these questions during the upcoming week.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Have you ever wondered what God's will is for your life? Well, here's part of it:
"In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
So, what gets in the way of gratitude and contentment in our lives? Let's see...

Monday—So, what is the **opposite** of contentment? Exodus 20:17 shows us!

- What is the implication of the fact that we "*shall not covet...anything that belongs to our neighbor*"?
- To "covet" is to "desire inordinately; to desire that which it is unlawful to obtain or possess."
What do you desire **inordinately**—either in the **frequency** with which you dream of it or in the **zeal** with which you pursue it's acquisition?
What do you desire which for you would be **unlawful to obtain or possess**?
- How has your inordinate or unlawful desire for these things blunted your contentment and gratitude?

Tuesday—Read 1 Timothy 6:6. The Greek word rendered as "contentment" literally means "self-sufficiency", and points to the fact that God already has given us everything we need in order to glorify and enjoy him. From the following verses, what are those abundant resources that we already possess? Ephesians 3:16; 6:16-18; 2 Timothy 1:7 and Galatians 5:22-23. Make a list of our current resources.

Wednesday—Read Psalm 37:4

- From this passage, what is our role and responsibility? What is God's?
- List some things that you know **from God's Word** are the sorts of desires that come **from Him**.
[Things such as: a desire to forgive, a desire to be generous, a desire to serve, a desire to love...]
- List the things that you desire now which almost certainly are **not** God-given desires.
Why do you think those desires are in your heart? What must you do about them?
- Observe that the Bible teaches that our desires are under the control of our will—not vice-versa!

Thursday—Matthew 6:19-21 teaches us **how** to direct our hearts...

- According to v. 19, what must we **not** do? According to v. 20, what **must** we do?
- According to v. 21, **why** we must choose **where** we store up treasures.
What's wrong with a Christian having his heart fixed on this world rather than the next?
- According to v. 21, **how** do we fix our **hearts** on heaven, rather than this world?
List the ten things (tangible and intangible things) you treasure most.
List the ways you're "investing what you treasure" in eternity rather than in this world.

Friday & Saturday— "*Fancy that!*"

- If you lived 350 years ago, you would have used the word "fancy" as an expression of surprise, meaning "to imagine, believe, or suppose" (as in, "*Fancy liking stale bread over fresh!*"). So, by extension, "to fancy" something meant to evaluate, esteem, or value it. We could say, to "treasure" it. Thomas Watson, who lived from 1620 to 1686, wrote the most profound treatment of the subject of gratitude, entitled *The Art of Divine Contentment*. Download it for free at: <monergism.com>, then...
- Find "Rule 13" (on page 70 in the PDF format). Write it out, replacing the word "fancy" with any of the following phrases: "estimate the worth of" or "imagine the value of". (Note that "fancy" occurs in both noun and verb forms, so adjust your phrases accordingly. Also, look up any confusing, archaic words—such as "eligible" and "distempered"—at <webstersdictionary1828.com> and replace them with what they mean. Feel free to modernize "raiseth" to "raise" (etc.) and leave off the closing illustration from ancient Greek philosophy which begins with the word, "Diogenes...")
- Now, **slowly** and **carefully** read **aloud** your modernized, clarified version of Watson's brilliant observations on regulating our estimation of things (and consequently, our desires and coveting).
Repeat this step until you understand Watson's insights and can rephrase them in your own words.