

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

Psalms 25:1-9

Philippians 2:1-13

Matthew 21:23-32

Sermon October 8th, 2023

Imagine if We Saw Everything God Did for Us as Unexpected!

In our gospel, Jesus heals ten people who have been struggling with a contagious skin disease, and then invites them to go to the priest to receive acceptance back into the community. Nine of the ten people go to the priest, and then re-enter their community, choosing not to return to Jesus to show gratitude for what he has done.

The tenth person does come back to Jesus to give thanks and praise for what Jesus has done for them.

Now, we can only assume why the other nine didn't return since the story itself doesn't flesh this out. One reason why they may have neglected to come back to Jesus and give thanks is, because it was an expectation of theirs that God would provide for their wellbeing, including healing them from any ailment that would prevent them from being full participants in the community. They are faithful people of God, and so, received the promise that God will provide for their wellbeing. Why do they need to give thanks to God for something God is expected to do (**Image One**: someone receiving something and looking smug)?

Like the nine, do we take people for granted in our lives? Do we show gratitude to people who do what we expect them to do for us? For example, our parents who take care of our needs, or our friends who listen to us vent about this and that, or our spouse who puts up with our annoying habits, or our children who put up with our tiring lectures, or our grandparents who drive an hour and half to show up to our games, or our teachers who help us learn, or our pets who sit on our laps comforting us when we are sad. There are many things the people and pets we love do for us that we come to expect from them. Sometimes it is easy for us to take our loved ones for granted (**Image One**). Instead, of showing gratitude for all that they do for us every day.

Likewise, do we take God for granted in our lives? Do we just expect God to provide for our well-being? Neglecting to show gratitude for all that God does for us every day (**Image One**)?

Honestly, it can get exhausting to show gratitude every time someone or God does something for us.

On the other hand, in our gospel, the one person who comes back is a Samaritan, and more than likely, didn't expect Jesus, who is from the Jewish community, to heal them from their skin disease. This is an act of grace in the eyes of the Samaritan person. So, they make an effort to come back to Jesus to give thanks, to show gratitude before returning to their community (**Image Two**: someone surprised by the kindness of someone else).

Are we more likely to show gratitude to someone, to God, when they do something for us that we didn't expect? Like, a parent that takes on a second job so that we can get that special something we have dreamed about for months. Or who forgives us for doing something we thought was unforgivable. Or that friend who misses a major concert or sporting event to sit with us as we work through our problems. Or that spouse who holds their tongue about an annoying habit we do, because they know we have had a hard day at the office. Or the child who embraces us with a hug and a thankyou for giving them that lecture. Or a grandparent who treks through a snow storm to make it out to our annual concert. Or a teacher who takes extra time to help us understand a concept. Or a pet who embraces us with a kiss after we share our wounds.

I don't know about you, but I find it easier to show gratitude for the acts I didn't expect from someone than the acts that I expect from people (**Image Two**).

Tomorrow we will gather in homes with family and friends, and share in a meal together. We will go around the table and share something we are thankful for this past year.

I invite us as we gather at our dinner tables this weekend to see those expected things people and God do for us in the same way that we see those unexpected things. That maybe we even stop expecting things from people, and become appreciative of every good deed someone does for us (**Image Two**).

Because when we carry in our hearts a measure of gratitude for everything someone or God does for us, we feel more connected to community, and when we feel more connected to community, our hearts are open to do good to others. To be generous as God is generous. To love one another as God loves us. Something we are expected to do as people of faith, but something that can touch people in unexpected ways (**Image Two**).

Let us pray, gracious God, thank you for loving us, for caring for us, for providing for our wellbeing. Be present at our tables this thanksgiving weekend, granting us hearts of gratitude, and moving us to care for others as you care for us. **Amen.**