

October 9, 2022

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 17:11-19

Thanksgiving!

We have so often assumed that Thanksgiving was a Christian celebration. We envision the Puritan Christians giving thanks to God for a safe journey to the New World. I am sure that they had hope in their hearts that their stay in the New World would be prosperous. We have often imagined the Puritans and the indigenous peoples celebrating together. I often ask myself what is the back story to this story. So I start to dig and what I often find amazes me.

Strangely enough, our Canadian celebration of Thanksgiving may be more appropriate for the time of year when we have it. It has been said that when the Puritans landed in Plymouth Rock they were reading the Old Testament. At the time of their arrival, they were reading about the Jewish Feast of Sukkot. This feast comes five days after Yom Kippur. It happens from October nine to the sixteenth. Sukkot is a celebration of bringing in the harvest and remembering God's

protection of the Jews in the desert. So it is about giving thanks to God on many levels. This Jewish Feast was the inspiration for the Puritans who set aside a special day to give thanks to God. Our Canadian time for Thanksgiving fits within the time for Sukkot. When I started down this rabbit hole, I never would have guessed that the Jewish Feast of Sukkot was the inspiration for Thanksgiving.

Rabbi's today make the point that giving thanks to God should be an everyday practice. This is something you should do morning, noon and night. They base the concept on David's Psalms which are filled with giving thanks to God. Psalm 107:1, 136:1, 92:1. Did you notice that giving thanks to God is the first line in each Psalm. That is how important it was for David and the Jews.

The Gospel reading this morning is considered the go-to reading for Thanksgiving in our church. It actually is a very good one. That being the story of the ten lepers who were cleansed by Jesus. However only one returned to thank Him for his healing. That person was a Samaritan. This begs the question, why would a Samaritan leper return to thank Jesus? The answer is more practical than you would imagine.

The ten lepers met Jesus outside of their village. As lepers they were isolated from the rest of the village due to their condition. The village elders did not want a leprosy epidemic. Jesus just speaks the words and instructs them, "Go and show yourself to the priest." Only to show the priest that they were healed and clean. The priest would be

the one to officially declare them clean and allow them back into the village. The Samaritan leper returned to Jesus because he knew the priest would not accept his healing. All because of the tensions between the Jews and Samaritans.

The Samaritan leper most likely recognized the power of the One who healed him. Jesus had no problem healing a Samaritan. For him Jesus was far greater than the village priest. He did not need the priest's acknowledgement, he wouldn't give it anyway, so the Samaritan turned around. The Samaritan had something far greater and Jesus alludes to it at the end of the passage. "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well." Only this foreigner returned to give glory to God. It was his faith and thanksgiving that makes this Samaritan such a great example to us of gratitude and thanksgiving. This is an appropriate passage for this weekend.

The highest form of prayer and worship to God is thanksgiving. Either personal or communal. Humility is the root of thanksgiving and gratitude. This is what we find in the Psalms and that is why the Psalms were the first prayer book of the church. Another important factor in thanksgiving is knowing that He is God and we are His children and heirs. As His children we should always be grateful for all that He has provided to us. We do not need to be God nor can we be God. We have never done that well. Thanksgiving is knowing our place in our relationship with God. Gratitude is always the best attitude. Be grateful we have a place and a relationship with Him. Knowing that is half the battle. Thank you G.I Joe.

Looking back on the past year, I am most grateful for all of you. Our church here is truly filled with Spirit inspired people. Who are willing to help and serve their neighbors. The Spirit moves amongst your ranks. Your warmth and friendship has made me feel part of your ranks. I consider you more than friends but family. For a Cape Bretoner that is very big. God bless you all, D