

Sermon preached by Rev Chris Moroney at the Healing Service at St. Andrew's Cathedral,
Sydney on Wednesday 26th September 2007. Reading: Ps: 118, Luke 17:11-18
Topic: "Thanksgiving"

1 "Young people today"

I do not know if it just because I am getting older or not, but the young people of today seem generally ungrateful for all the good things they enjoy.

As we contemplate our **47 years of the Healing Ministry** we can remember the many people who have come and shared with us here in the Cathedral and out at Golden Grove. We can reflect on the hundreds of people who have come with problems, and sicknesses and emotional needs and asked for prayer.

And we can thank God from the bottom of our hearts for all the answers to prayer with which he has blessed us. Testimony after testimony can be given of God's amazing grace. Person after person can share their story of the way in which they came for a short term solution to their immediate problem and found a long term answer to their ultimate problem of sin and separation from God, which was salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. We look together at the Bible's teaching on Thanksgiving.

2 Thanksgiving in the Old Testament

- **The Psalms**

Psalm 118 is just one place where the Psalmist encourages his readers to give thanks to the Lord. *Because his steadfast love endures forever.* See verses 1-4 God is also worthy of our praise and thanks because he hears and answers prayer. See v 5, v 8-9, v21, v25

This psalm looks forward to the ultimate salvation in Jesus Christ in verse 22 *"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone"* But it is always true that we can give thanks to God for his steadfast love and goodness to us as it is expressed in the final verses 28-29.

- **Naaman**

What is the right and proper response for the person who is in trouble and whom the Lord rescues or heals? Thanks and praise and service. In 2 Kings 5 we about Naaman the Syrian commander who gets leprosy. His slave girl tells him about Elisha the prophet of the Lord God. Naaman has the faith to go and see the prophet, and after some further persuasion agrees to dip himself in to the river Jordan seven times. He was healed absolutely by God. He wants to give some gifts to Elisha. But Elisha won't take it. It is as if he is saying "To God be the glory great things He has done."

Naaman undertakes to give up his pagan worship and really follow the true and living God. Naaman was truly thankful. Remember too that when we come to the leper who was thankful in Luke 17, that Naaman was a foreigner, in the land of Israel. And we will know many people in our own experience who have come to genuine faith in God as a result of God's gracious answers to their prayers and ours here and the Healing Ministry.

3 Thanksgiving in the New Testament

- **Encouragements**

There are many encouragements for God's people to give thanks. It would seem that we always need that help in our thinking. It is part of our sinful nature that we can so easily take God for granted and expect his blessing to come our way all the time. Take for instance 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and Colossians 3:15-17

- **The Samaritan**

We see Jesus amazement, when the other 9 lepers did not come back to give God praise and to acknowledge Jesus as Lord. This is a very specific reminder of the need, and the expectation that we should be thankful and more spiritually aware when we are healed by God.

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. He is going there to die, like so many of the other prophets, this time to die upon the cross. Jesus shows his authority as he calls people to follow him, as he answers difficult and genuine questions alike, as he throws out challenges to his listeners directly and indirectly through the parables and as he heals people along the way.

In this particular episode, there are 10 lepers who call out to Jesus somewhere between Samaria and Galilee. The Samaritans were not true blue Jews. They were mixed race people who only took the first five books of the bible as God's word, and worshipped God at Mount Gerizem not Mt Zion, where the Temple was in Jerusalem. Samaritans and Jews usually kept the distance from one another. On the other hand, lepers had to keep their distance from everyone else. So this terrible disease may have brought some racially divided people together in a common cause, survival.

We have the impression that he heard them before he saw them. But when they did come into view, when he was able to focus in on their condition. Their cleansing is almost a given. Almost taken for granted, such is the power of Jesus. V14. In their going there were cleansed. As they followed Jesus' instructions, they were healed. **As they put their faith in the words of Jesus they received.** Now what would they do? Get on and see the priest and get the all clear? Press on with getting back to the family? Proceed back to the workshop and picking where life left off before? Just one of them, seeing that he was cleansed turned back to Jesus to praise God and acknowledge in a deeper way that Jesus is Lord. See v15-16. Jesus expresses his amazement at two levels

Firstly, how was the count. Weren't there 10 lepers cleansed. He obviously expected the others to share in this man's praise and thanks.

Secondly, the only one to come back, with praise and thanks, was not a Jew.

He was a Samaritan. He was not someone who had all the benefits of a Jewish heritage, raised on the precepts and history of the Old Testament, with the legacy of the Temple and the library of the prophets. Those Jewish lepers should have been streets ahead of this foreigner.

What did this say about the state of faith in the life of the Jewish community which was Jesus' primary mission? What it says is that God's judgement of the Jews was just and fair and appropriate. They were indeed a long way from realizing their God-given potential. They should have welcomed and recognized Jesus as their long expected Messiah.

This man is a great example for all of us. When he cried out to Jesus, along with the others, he may have understood only a little of who Jesus really was. But once he saw the power of Jesus as work in his life, how his healing could come about at the word of Jesus, he came to realize that Jesus was worthy of his honour and worship and thanks.

He has already been healed. Jesus says to him that his expression of faith, his acknowledgement of the Lordship of Jesus, has made him well, and the footnote tells us that he means, *has saved you*. Through his realization of who Jesus really is, this man's physical healing has led to his spiritual healing.

4 Thanksgiving in our lives

Thanksgiving for particular healing should move us to a clearer view of the person and work of the Lord Jesus, and a life of ongoing thanksgiving and praise. In answer to our prayers we see all sorts of wonderful demonstrations

of the power of God. In our prayers we are exercising and developing faith in God as our Heavenly Father, and in Jesus Christ his Son and our Lord.

The greatest tragedy of all would be that people like you and me would simply pray and receive and leave. And forget about God altogether. To do that would mean that we had not really encountered the true and living God. God's gracious answers to our prayers should help us to learn more and more of the loving

faithful character of God and remind us of that ultimate expression of God's love for each one us. He sent Jesus into our world, to die on that cross on the hill outside the city of Jerusalem.

For, even though we have so often lived and behaved in a way that showed no regard for God, his laws or his love, he still sent his only Son into our world, He did that for the express purpose of Jesus taking the punishment for sin that we all deserve. His death brings the forgiveness of sins to all who trust in Jesus.

That is the final and most meaningful healing that there is. That is the healing of the broken relationship between us and God. That is wholeness of the soul for eternity. As we look back over the years and reflect on God's many blessings, God's many healings and God's many saving acts, may we always be full of thanksgiving and praise, not only Wednesday by Wednesday, but each day of our lives.

Amen.