

Luke 17:11-19

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance

13 and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

14 When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice.

16 He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him-- and he was a Samaritan.

17 Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?"

18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"

19 Then he said to him, "**Rise and go; your faith has made you well.**"

INTRO - Yesterday I attended, for a very short time, a surprise birthday party one of our members threw for his wife. It was held at a local restaurant for a special birthday. Now, how do you think the conversation went to get her to the restaurant? "Hey, honey, it's your birthday. Let's go to the restaurant." Well, that's true. And, going out to eat is usually good news. But, because you and I know it was a birthday party, with lots of family and friends there, we also know that there was more to that story, more to the request made.

I. Today is stewardship Sunday. You may think I'm going to talk about financial stewardship.

A. We've been talking about discipleship.

1. Part of that discipleship is managing our lives for the Lord.

2. We are called to serve Him with our time and efforts, with our talents and gifts, with our resources.

B. God does have a plan for financial stewardship that is really pretty easy.

1. He wants us to serve Him with all our heart, and God wants people who are cheerful in their giving. The first part of God's plan is being **cheerful**.

2. The second part of God's plan is for His people to give **proportionately** to the work of the church, to return to Him as he has given to us. Usually Christians point to a tithe as a faithful response.

3. Thirdly, God calls for us to give our **first fruits** - in other words, we give to Him before we use our money for our other plans and needs.

4. Finally, God calls for us for our giving to be **sacrificial**. We shouldn't be surprised if such giving is difficult.

5. That is God's plan for giving.

II. But, guess what, just like the request of the husband to His wife to go to the restaurant, God's plan for giving is only part of the story, not really where our lesson focuses, and not where God would focus, and really there is a whole bunch more to focus on.

A. You see, living for God does not begin with what we have done for Him,

1. Instead, it begins with what God has done for us.

2. In fact, a life of discipleship is a response of thanks to the love of God.

3. Please look at the Gospel lesson for today.

B. Jesus healed 10 leprosy men from their disease and the horrible exile from the rest of society they experienced.

1. He had pity on them so they were now well.

2. In healing them he had given them back their life on this earth, done for them what they couldn't do for themselves.

3. In response one man looked at the source of the blessing.

4. The Samaritan returned to Jesus with words of thanks and praise, he bowed his face to the

ground in thanks and worship for his healing. He left with witness and praise of Jesus on his lips.

5. This man's focus had been not so much on him self, but rather on his healing and health, but on Jesus, and his power, and mercy, and love.

C. If we look at the love of God in our lives, if we really think of what has happened in our lives, we will be full of thankfulness too.

1. This man experienced a healing, how many of us can say the same.

2. I have recently spent time with two of our members who shared their thankfulness. Bill Allen and Pete Probasco are both thankful for healing in the lives of grand children. Thank you, Lord!

3. Recently, when I heard of Leisa Carrick's breast cancer, I shared my concern with my wife who said, 'You know, in many ways breast cancer is very curable today with early detection.' I started thinking of many in our church who have had the same diagnosis and surgery, and are doing well. How great is the love of God? What a reason to be thankful. By the way, I recently visited Leisa and her family and she has a wonderful report from the doctors. Praise the Lord!

4. When you listen to today's prayers, listen to all the people whose prayers have been answered in positive ways. God is good!

5. We have so much in the way of blessings from the Lord in this life, whether health, or family, or our talents, our country. God is so good, our thanks should flow naturally.

III. But, the story of Jesus' love for the leprous man does not end with the healing.

A. After the man had come and given thanks and praise to Jesus, Jesus sends him away, by responding.

1. **"Rise and go; your faith has made you well."**

2. Actually, in the Greek, the meaning is really, rise and go, your faith has SAVED you.

3. Truthfully, Jesus had not only responded to the trust of the leper and given physical healing, but, as the man trusted in Jesus, by Jesus' grace and mercy, he had forgiven the man his sins and saved him for eternal life in heaven.

4. Now, talk about reason for thanks!

B. Jesus has done the same for us.

1. What we deserve is punishment for our rebellion and sin. Think of our lack of love, our lack of obedience, our failures, our sin,. Imagine what we DESERVE in response to our sins.

2. But, in love, God sent Jesus, who not only saved this leprous man from disease, but died on the cross for His sin and ours, and who rose again to win eternal life for this man and for all of us who believe.

3. Jesus' forgiveness give us joy and peace and purpose in this life.

4. Jesus' salvation saves us from the struggle of sin in this life for eternal life in heaven.

5. God's goodness is so great. . . so great we sometimes take it for granted.

C. You see, Jesus love is the real story in today's lesson.

1. When we understand, and comprehend, the real love of Jesus, when we focus on what he has done for us in this life and eternally, our hearts will be full of thanks.

2. We want to serve the Lord, *as disciples*, with all our time and talents and treasures.

3. In thanks, with grateful hearts, we want to serve the Lord.

4. You see, when it comes to giving, we don't have to focus so much on our response, but on Jesus' love. When we understand the mercy, and love of God in this world and eternally, our thankful, cheerful response will be generous and sacrificial.

CONCLUSION - For our member whose birthday it was the good news was going out to eat. But, the real story is the love and thanks that led, not only to a meal at a restaurant, but also to a nice party.

For us today on Stewardship Sunday the real story is not how we are to respond, though, God does call us to response. The real story is the love of Jesus. When we see that we will live thankful lives of discipleship that include financial stewardship.