

*Pepperdine University
Thanksgiving Service 2008
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Scripture Luke 17: 11-19

11Now 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^[a] met him. They stood at a distance **13**and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

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

15One 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.

17Jesus 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."

Theme: An Attitude of Gratitude

The Bible says we have not because we ask not

*but many of us have asked and received and yet still don't believe we have a reason to
give thanks.*

We focus on what we don't have instead of what we do.

*Looking at the cup as half empty gives us the blues and
we still don't have a clue that we need an attitude of gratitude –
a gratitude gladitude moment each day.*

*Some say when the praises go up to God, the blessings come down
but instead of worshipping we walk around campus with frowns.*

Let's set the atmosphere.

Shake up this place with authentic joy on our faces.

An attitude of gratitude for blessings big and small –

*This is a call for each of us to stop and remember the gifts from above –
our divine covering – the symbol of the cross and the dove.*

In this season especially we have much for which we should be grateful.

For Hilary Clinton and Sarah Palin who stood tall for everyone and especially for women and girls facing sexism, unequal pay, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and objectification. For them we give thanks.

For John McCain who stood tall for everyone and especially the numerous unnamed, unrecognized, forgotten veterans facing PTSD, homelessness, disability, and disenfranchisement - for him we give thanks.

For Joe Biden who stood tall for everyone and especially the many unsung fathers who commit to raising their children with nurturance, sacrifice, and integrity. For him we give thanks.

And for President Elect Barack Obama who stood tall for everyone and especially for those past and present confronted with bigotry, racism, discrimination, xenophobia, segregation, lynching ropes, auction blocks, Jim crow, and colonialism. Obama stands tall as a testament of our possibility – we give thanks.

Regardless of our political affiliations or religious denominations, we give thanks. For each of us are the change agents the world can believe in. We give thanks for faith, growth, and transformation.

We have a reason, you have a reason, I have a reason to give thanks.

In our text we find one who remembered to go back and thank Jesus.

The story is told of 10 lepers – 10 rejects

- those cast out, thrown out, and discarded.

If we bring the story to modern times we can think of the 10 lepers as representing those of us who have experienced rejection – rejection from our families, our peers, or even our school – those of us who did not always fit in or do not fit in today.

We who like the lepers know what it's like to be feared or misunderstood or judged or underestimated – we who have ever experienced being marginalized or stigmatized – we are to a certain degree like the lepers in our text.

We who don't fit the Pepperdine stereotype can relate to the lepers.

You love God but you have questions that make some people uncomfortable – you can relate to the lepers.

You are not from a wealthy family – you can relate to the lepers.

Or you are from a family of wealth but not a family of love – you can relate to the lepers.

You who walk around campus seeing few reflections of yourself – you can relate to the lepers.

I have good news this morning, a reminder that Jesus came for you – came for us, all of us. When the lepers cried out for mercy, relief, justice, and healing. Jesus responded to them go forward. For he knew in their moving forward they would be healed. The same was true for us. In spite of stereotype, stigma, past rejections – we pressed forward and applied to Pepperdine, pressed forward and stayed up late studying and writing papers, pressed forward and came to work this morning, pressed forward and in the process of your pressing God has begun to heal you from the pain of your yesterday.

So here we are – those who stepped out on faith and God is healing us. God has healed us but we have to go back, reconnect with Christ, and show our thanks.

An attitude of gratitude is required of us. Like the leper who came back to thank Jesus for his healing. We have to go back to the source of our strength and give thanks in prayer, in meditation, and in our relationships with each other. We give thanks by taking care of the body temple God has given us and honoring the body temples of our sisters and brothers. We give thanks for the opportunity to study and work by applying a spirit of excellence to all that we do.

There were 10 lepers that were healed but only one came back to say thank you. What happened to the other 9 Pepperdine students on this beautiful morning? Well, Michael has a big exam coming up so he doesn't have time to come to service. Judy is on "Facebook" trying to make a love connection. William is working on his graduate school application. Ebony is studying for the GREs. Joe is working his way through school as a plumber. Jennifer is exhausted and taking a nap. Ernesto is on the phone having an argument with his girlfriend back home. Annette is staring out the window of her room wondering if she can afford to stay in school. And Josh is working out at the gym.

But you, each of you – like the one healed leper - took the time out of your busy list of things to do today and said I have to stop and reflect, stop and give thanks, stop and adjust my attitude to one of gratitude. Things may not be perfect. Our lives are not easy. Yet we are blessed and privileged at this very moment. Regardless of our current bank

account balance, GPA, popularity, or the level of drama in our lives, we have something for which we can give thanks.

When the leper came back to Jesus, he received even more from being in the presence of Jehovah Shalom, God our peace. The same is true for us. Psychologists have found that those who take time each day to reflect in thought or in writing on things for which they are grateful, have healthier minds, bodies, and spirits. Those who take time to embrace an attitude of gratitude report more energy, enthusiasm, positive attitudes, determination, joy, optimism, self worth, positive relationships, quality sleep, and goal attainment and less depression, stress, physical sickness, and materialism.

There are benefits to giving thanks. An attitude of gratitude blesses us and those we encounter each day.

So in this season in our nation's history, let us embrace an attitude of gratitude. For those who were legally banned from reading and for those who live with illiteracy today, let us give thanks for the opportunity to learn and study. For those who gave their lives so that we could vote and for those living today who can not vote, let us give thanks for the opportunity to make our voices heard. For those who grew up in separate and unequal schools and those today who still attend underfunded schools, let us give thanks for the opportunity to be a part of Mr. Pepperdine's vision for faith and academic excellence. For those whose past experiences of rejection, abuse, misuse, and modern day leprosy have resulted in them now suffering from mental illness, substance dependence, and fear, let us give thanks that in spite of our past challenges we are here today with an

opportunity to make this campus, make this country, and make this world a brighter place – for all people. Let us give thanks.

An attitude of gratitude means I make a decision to focus on the good in my life instead of being consumed by complaints. I make a decision to show love and appreciation not fear or intolerance. I make a decision to speak life into dead places, to thank God for the many mountains that have been moved in my lifetime, and to know God's purpose for my life shines brighter than my most difficult days. An attitude of gratitude is an active choice to say on this day and every day, I give thanks.