

“Eucharistic Thanks” Luke 17:11-19 Trinity 14 2022

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ Jesus rest upon each and every one of you this day.

Today’s Gospel lesson is obviously about giving thanks to God. That’s a no-brainer. Unfortunately, because the message is so clear, we often wind up missing the true wisdom that our Lord endeavours to teach us in this lesson. And when this is the case; when we stop interrogating the text and stop seeking wisdom from the Holy Spirit, and instead go on cruise control, arrogantly assuming that we already know everything there is to know about the text; that’s when a lot of ignorance and bad, dangerous theology can wind up trespassing in and taking over. Case in point: Because we think we know it so well, this lesson is often treated more as an etiquette lesson than a Gospel lesson.

Folks: There is SO MUCH more here than a mere primer on proper etiquette. The original Greek tells us that the Samaritan, when he had realized that he had been made well, made an abrupt about-face and returned to Jesus, glorifying God with a loud voice, falling on his face at Jesus’ feet and “eucharisto auto”, which we translate as, “gave thanks to Him.” What does this mean? What might we be missing?

Let’s begin with the fact that this guy returned back to Jesus in order to glorify God. Remember: All ten guys were on their way to the

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Temple. They had to show themselves to the high priest and offer up the proper sacrifices and offerings to be declared “clean” and welcomed back into worship and fellowship. They were all going to be in God’s house and presence! And yet...this lowly Samaritan leper is the ONLY one who recognized God in the presence and person of Jesus. Now all ten, to their credit, did initially cry out to Jesus to have mercy on them. They all cried to Jesus for healing. That’s commendable. We don’t want to lose sight of this. However...when it came time to be in God’s presence, where did they look? Where did they go? Maybe the better question is: Where did they NOT look for God? In the wisdom of faith, the Samaritan knew where to look. He returned to Jesus and glorified God; that is, he gave glory to God in the flesh, mercifully standing before him in his very presence.

There’s also the fact that this Samaritan fell at Jesus’ feet in praise and thanksgiving. This is the posture of faithful repentance and humility. This is the posture of prayer. This is the posture of repentant thanksgiving. This guy doesn’t come to Jesus like Jesus is his buddy. They’re not equals—not even close—and he acknowledges this. He returns to Jesus and immediately prostrates himself—falls flat on his face at Jesus’ feet—and praises Him for such undeserved mercy and goodness. He wasn’t too proud to take such a lowly position.

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And then there’s the biggest kicker of all; probably one of the most often over-looked and missed parts of the entire text: This lowly guy return to Jesus, prostrates himself as glorifies God, and eucharisto auto; that is, he gives thanks to Him. Now, you don’t have to be a Greek scholar or hold a graduate degree in theology to hear the word “eucharist.” It’s right there, hiding in plain sight. I want you to think about this, because the entire meaning of the lesson is wrapped up in these simple words.

The Samaritan leper had the wisdom of saving faith. He understood. He returned to Jesus and “eucharisto’d” to Him. He gave thanks to Jesus. He gave thanks and praise to God-in-the-flesh for the undeserved and overwhelming gift of mercy and life that had been so unconditionally bestowed upon him. He “eucharisto’d” Jesus, because in the wisdom of faith, he understood all that God had done for him...in spite of him.

God calls us to daily and constant repentance. A repentant faith comes forward and receives this undeserved and unconditional gift of Christ’s victory and mercy empty-handed. You come bearing nothing; nothing but the sacrifice of thanksgiving—eucharisto. This is Christ for you! This is Christ for you, not because of who you are, but because of

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who He is! You come forward, empty-handed, prostrating yourself in humble, repentant joy, letting God Himself fill you up with His life, His love, and His mercy, lowering yourself before the King of Heaven and Earth, and giving most humble and repentant thanks that Almighty God loved you so much that He willingly died and rose again for you, the very fruits of that divine mercy and victory that He Himself is holding out to you and feeding you with in your very presence at that very moment. The wisdom of faith just “gets it.” I can’t make you get it. I can’t make you want this. I can’t make you hunger and thirst for this righteousness; the righteousness of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

One final thought before we call it a day: Notice how your God and Lord freely and unconditionally gives you this gift of eternal life ALL THE TIME! Even when life is absolutely crumbling all around you, and it seems like all is lost...you are still a redeemed child of God. This gift of Christ is ALWAYS held out to you. There is NEVER a time you’re NOT redeemed and loved, in Christ and because of Christ. You have this gift and promise of Christ—ALWAYS! Wherever Christ’s Word is rightly taught and His sacraments rightly administered, there is Christ; there is peace; there is reason to eucharisto; to give thanks. It doesn’t matter how high the flood waters get. It doesn’t matter how strong and damaging the winds are. It doesn’t matter how sick or broke you are.

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You have God’s promise that NOTHING can ever separate you from the love that He has for you, in Christ and because of Christ.

And please don’t wait for the tragedy to get you lined-out and turned back to Christ. You don’t have to wait for Christmas Eve or Easter Sunday to roll around. You don’t have to wait for Thanksgiving Day. The wisdom of faith; the wisdom that understands the theology of Christ’s cross and all-redeeming sacrifice, doesn’t take a day off. It doesn’t wait for the schedule to clear up in order to squeeze in a little thanksgiving. Yard work, fishing, golfing...nothing comes before Christ! God’s love and mercy and providence NEVER takes a day off. The wisdom of thankful, repentant faith gets this.

Eucharistic faith puts the first things first. Eucharistic faith looks for and longs to be in the presence of Christ...ALWAYS. Well...here is Christ! O give thanks unto the Lord—“eucharisto” unto the Lord—in all times and in all places, for He is good, and His mercy endures forever. You’re living proof of it. Does it get any more obvious than this?!
Amen.