**Gratitude for Salvation**

Based on [Luke 17:11-19](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk17.11-19)

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Gratitude is a central virtue of the Christian. And it’s easy to tell pessimistic people to “be thankful”. But that’s often stale advice to those who are in the throes of great pain or anguish. Gratitude is not something that you can simply conjure up. You cannot really be grateful unless you believe you have more than you deserve. You can only be grateful for a gift.

Today’s gospel is about Jesus healing ten lepers. It seems to be a very straightforward account. They beg for help and he sends them off to the priest. And as they are leaving, he heals them. Only one, however, comes back to say thank you. He is a foreigner. Jesus says that it is his faith that saved him.

There is a strong message in the scripture about the ungratefulness of the Jews in Jesus’ day. They believed, through the teaching of their chief priests and elders, that they *deserved* God’s grace. John the Baptist chastises them saying, **“And do not say “we have the blood of Abraham, for I tell you God can raise up from these stones children of Abraham**.” They believed that they were owed God’s favor, because they were God’s people. That attitude makes repentance impossible. So too, the nine Jews believed they were owed health as god’s people. Only the samaritan could really be grateful, because he knew God didn’t owe him anything. That is the faith that saved him.

Someone might say, “All ten of the lepers came to Jesus and asked him for help. They all had faith.” But Jesus only credits the samaritan with faith. And what we can understand here is that faith is more than turning to Jesus for help. Faith is more than believing Jesus is Lord and can help you. Faith also believes that we are poor miserable sinners, and that we deserve nothing but God’s temporal and eternal punishment. In fact, every time we confess our sins, we ask God specifically not to give us what we deserve.

Just consider that word, “deserve”, and how it’s used. When you feel sorry for how someone is being treated, it is a common response to show sympathy by saying “He deserves better.” "That poor man...He deserves better" “She, deserves better” No she doesn’t. No he doesn't. Not really. Not unless he's Jesus on the cross.

Friends, we need to be careful with the words we say. Be careful that you don't promote false doctrine with your words. No one deserves better. What each and every one of us deserve is to suffer and die for our sins. “My sins are ever before me”. Whatever you suffer in this life always remember that you deserve to suffer infinitely more. Only then can you be grateful for what you have.

This doctrine of original sin is scandalous. It is one of the most opposed teachings of our faith. For that reason alone, you should take the time to reflect on it daily. You ought to reflect upon what you think you “deserve” from God. When you work you deserve your wages, and scripture says, “**The wages of sin is death**”. That’s what your work has earned, death...and eternal death in hell. We are liars, murderers, adulterers, and thieves...if not in deed, then at least in our hearts. The thief on the cross, the penitent one, confesses rightly, “**We are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.**”

Ingratitude is at the root of today’s godlessness. People believe that if there is a good and all-powerful God; he owes them a life and a world without suffering death and loss. What a strong delusion...as if the living God owed anybody anything. Does the potter not have the right to mould the clay however he wishes? Can he not create vessels of greater honor and lesser honor, some who are treated better, some worse? Does not the creator of the universe have the right to do as he pleases with what is his?

You who are jars of clay, what standing or what power do you have to bring a complaint? Who are you, O man, to blame God for the evil you commit? Does he owe you righteousness? No, you owe Him. And you can protest God with righteous indignation all you want. You can stand in a picket line with the rest of the ingrates of fallen mankind; but you will do so outside of the pearly gates. Will it bring you any satisfaction to cry “not fair” for an eternity, to forever weep and gnash your teeth? And all because you would not humble yourself and receive God’s grace with thanksgiving.

Those who are saved are those who believe they deserve to suffer. That is what he promised to give you for your sin, and that’s what he delivers. Only the Samaritan, the foreigner understood he had no right to even ask Jesus for help, and so only he could be truly thankful to receive it. Likewise, only a poor miserable sinner with one foot in the grave sees the need for a saviour...to pull him out of it.

This is why the doctrine of original sin must always be taught alongside the gospel. It is merciful and loving to teach people that they don’t really deserve anything from God but condemnation. Consider this, even if you were able to serve God and do his will, he doesn’t owe you a thank you. You are his creature and when you obey, you are only doing your duty. When you give to charity, when you help your neighbor, you are only doing what your supposed to do. Maybe you have something to boast about but not before God. Before God you are a sinner asking for something you don’t deserve...forgiveness Thanks be to God that is exactly what he wants to give you. “For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.” Thanks be to God, through Christ Jesus who has given us unworthy servants the victory.