

Learning to Pray with a Thankful Man: Gratitude and Prayer

Luke 17:11-19 || Pastor Paul Hahn || 13 February 2022

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: Are there times when it is easier or more difficult to accept the thanks and gratitude of others? Why do you think this is the case for you?

Worship: [Psalm 118](#) (*Remain a few moments in worship with this passage. What is God's invitation?*)

Sermon Summary for [Luke 17:11-19](#) (*Read the passage aloud before reading the sermon summary.*)

Why is it that thankfulness can be so difficult for us? How come the prodigal son gets it, while the brother who stays with the Father does not? Few of us would ever identify this as an issue we have. Thanklessness toward Jesus and toward our Father doesn't typically concern us all that much. Why, though? Because we don't see it as that big of a deal. But scripture emphasizes the importance of thankful hearts ([Col 3:15](#) | [1 Thess 5:18](#)). Gratitude toward God is a signature mark of faith, whereas ungratefulness is a sign of unbelief. How then can we develop thankful hearts toward Christ through our prayers?

As we pray, we need eyes that see occasion for gratefulness // Being struck with leprosy was seen as an act of God's judgment. To have it removed was to be freed from condemnation, to be restored to community, to have your body renewed. To be healed of leprosy was to receive your life back from the dead. In Luke 17, nine of the men saw they had been cleansed, but only one had the eyes to see what Jesus had done for him – that he had been brought back to life. The same is true for us: we will never be thankful for Christ until we humbly see our deep need for Him and wonder at the gifts of healing, wholeness, and new life He has given us.

As we pray, we need feet that take us back to express our thanks // The man who saw that Christ had healed him chose to do the thankful thing (running toward Jesus) instead of the religious thing (showing himself before the priest for ritual healing). Running back to Jesus to say, "Thank you!" is the most significant movement we can make. Thanksgiving is how we draw near to God; it's the New Testament means of temple worship. Only to the man who came back to express his thankfulness does Jesus say, "Your faith has made you well." Faith that makes us well – that saves us – is faith filled with gratitude. Because eternal life is living near to God, and gratitude puts us before the face of God. It's what enables us to share the fellowship of God in Christ

As we pray, we need bodies laid out in gratitude // Kingdom faith expresses whole-hearted – even full-bodied – thanksgiving to God. The man who said "thank you" cried out in a loud voice to Jesus and fell on his face at His feet. When was the last time we were extravagant in our praise and thanksgiving of God? What would this look like for each of us? And why does Jesus want this level of gratitude from us?

- > Because fathers love this from their children – love that is overflowing, dynamic.
 - > Because the world takes note of this kind of gratitude.
 - > Because these full expressions of thanksgiving make us whole in Christ.
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Discussion Questions (You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussions.)

Guiding Question: Do you see all that Jesus has done for you? (Keep in mind as we go through the study.)

As we pray, we need eyes that see occasion for gratefulness

- Why is the practice of thankfulness so challenging for us?
 - What are some prerequisites (for our mind, heart, and/or body) for thankfulness and gratitude?
- The Sabbath is a form of gratefulness that gives us eyes to see. Discuss how you practice Sabbath and how this helps you to “see” as the healed man did in Luke 17.
- What is the significance to the detail that the one who returned “was a Samaritan”?

As we pray, we need feet that take us back to express our thanks

- Faith that prioritizes prayers of gratitude keeps us in front of Jesus; it’s centering. With that in mind:
 - When was the last time you did something completely new as an expression to God? Or: what is something that you stopped doing to focus your attention more on God?
 - What is something new we could begin (or something we could remove) as a group to put our focus on the Lord and gratefulness?

As we pray, we need bodies laid out in gratitude

- How did the healed man’s actions proclaim the praise and gratitude he felt toward God?
- Our physical presence prepares our minds and hearts for prayer. In what ways do you respond to God through movement or posture to help connect your heart and mind with His?

Additional Prayer Resource: Many of us struggle with how our body’s actions might prepare us for prayer. Thomas Aquinas taught that certain attitudes and gestures of the body can dispose us for prayer and, conversely, that prayer can burst forth in a bodily expression. St. Dominic’s ways of prayer stirred the curiosity of his brothers. It is said that they would watch him pray and saw him pray with these different postures or gestures:

- 1) bowing from the head, shoulder or waist,
- 2) facedown outstretched on the floor,
- 3) kneeling,
- 4) hands held forward open or clasped,
- 5) arms lifted high,
- 6) in physical conversation with the Word of God,
- 7) walking.

Try adding some of these bodily actions as well as heartfelt expressions of gratitude to your prayer times this week.

Engage & Experience: Prayer & Gratitude

Last week, you were encouraged – through prayer – to bring the needs of your family, friends, community, or the world before God, realizing that your prayers have been ordained by Him to accomplish His purposes. Share your reflections with others.

This week, write a prayer (6-8 sentences) where you tell a story of gratitude to God. Recall an event and express gratitude for how God met and blessed you through it. To learn more about praying prayers of gratitude that bring delight to the heart of God see, [Pray With Your Eyes Open, Chapter 12: Communicating Gratitude](#)

If your group wishes to work through the book [Pray With Your Eyes Open](#) by Richard Pratt, along with the discussion guide, you can find the link to purchase [HERE](#). Take your time in practicing the exercises in this book; it can serve as a resource for the entire year of our focus on prayer.