

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Intro

There it was – white letters on a red background – staring up at me;  
you couldn't miss it.

There it was on FACEBOOK – shining out for all to see:

***Who else is bold enough to say that despite the lockdown  
The Lord has been good to me.***

Who else could say this? Could YOU? Would you?

Because this is precisely what's going on behind the scenes in our Gospel reading this morning.

## I. Ten Lepers

A. In the Gospel reading Jesus comes upon Ten Lepers.

1. Now remember leprosy in Jesus' day was a terrible disease and anyone who had it was instantly ostracized and had to stand a long way off and warn people to keep away from them.

2. These lepers cry out for Jesus to have mercy on them.

3. Jesus then tells them to show themselves to the priest, for only a priest could pronounce someone healed and whole.

4. And it was ON THEIR WAY that they suddenly noticed that they were healed.

5. ONE of the Lepers, seeing that he was healed, "turned back, praising God with a loud voice."

6. And in a surprising twist to the story, the one who turns back is a SAMARITAN – a hated foreigner – who lives outside the religious practices of the Jews.

7. And yet Jesus holds him up as the symbol of **faithful living**, because he RETURNED TO GIVE THANKS.

## B. But what about the other Nine? What happened to them?

1. They were probably doing what Jesus told them to do – “Go to the priest and be pronounced healed.”
2. So then, do they get in trouble for doing what Jesus tells them to do?
3. No, Jesus doesn't take the healing back.
  - They don't suddenly show up at the Temple and are covered with leprosy again – Jesus doesn't work that way – God doesn't work that way.
4. It's just that the one Leper RETURNED and gave THANKS.

## C. Now let's think about that Leper.

1. It's important to remember that the Lepers were not healed until they started for the priest.
2. As Jesus told the one who returned, “Your faith has made you well.”
3. They didn't get well by sitting around – they acted.
  - They got up off their duffs and did something.
4. So often we sit around and ask God for things and then wait for something to happen, and have God to do all the work.
5. It's like the story of the man who got lost in the woods.
  - He was so frightened and lost that eventually he got down on his knees and prayed for God to help him.
6. “And did God answer your prayer?” his friend asked.
  - “No,” the man replied, “Before God had a chance, a Forest Ranger came and showed me the way out.”
7. God answers our prayers more than we know – and we need to be willing and aware enough to say, “Thank you.”

## II. Giving Thanks

*Who else is bold enough to say that despite the lockdown  
The Lord has been good to me.*

A. Here we are – gathered together on a Sunday especially focused on Thanksgiving. So, how are we at giving thanks?

1. Are we more like the Nine Lepers or the Tenth one who came back to say Thank you?

2. We have so much to be thankful for – but do we ever stop to return thanks?

3. Even on a day set aside to give thanks – do we?

4. Do we even give thanks 1 out of 10 times, like the Lepers?

5. Yes, there's a PANDEMIC going on – Yes, it prevents us from doing what we want to do;

- We can't **worship** all together, because it isn't safe.

6. But even in spite of everything going on around us – WE can still say **THANK YOU** to God for all the many blessings we have received.

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B. But like that man in the woods, we seem to be blind to the many blessings that God continues to shower upon us.

1. When God gives us the gift of a new day – do we say Thank You or take it for granted?

2. We hear the birds chirping and see the beautiful flowers and trees, but we don't give it a moment's thought that God has given us those blessings and given us the senses to enjoy them with.

3. We grumble about having to eat the same old cereal, forgetting that many would gladly eat *anything* for breakfast.

4. We complain about our jobs or that we have so much to do, forgetting that many would be grateful just to have a job or even the bodily strength to go to work.

5. We complain about not having enough money, forgetting that we spend more on entertainment each month than many around the world earn as their annual income.

6. God has blessed us far more than we ever realize – and the question for us is how do we respond – how do we give thanks?

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C. So, what are YOU thankful for?

What are the things YOU want to say “thank you” to God for?

1. In a few minutes, we will participate in the Litany of Thanksgiving, and as we do – FOCUS on each petition and add the things in your heart that you are thankful for – and then SAY the response like you mean it.

2. God gives us SO MUCH – and we say Thank You so little.

3. And then let us join in the Great THANKSGIVING as we celebrate the Eucharist to say Thank You to God.

Let us Pray (in the words of the hymn)

We thank thee, then, O Father  
For all things bright and good,  
The seed-time and the harvest  
Our life, our health, our food:  
The gifts we have to offer  
Are what thy love imparts,  
But chiefly thou desirest  
Our humble thankful hearts.  
All good gifts around us  
Are sent from heaven above  
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord,  
For all his love. AMEN (Hymn 291 v.3)