

11 On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, 13 they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. 15 Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. 16 He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? 18 Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19 Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

That leper. That Samaritan leper. He should say thank you to Jesus. He ought to be grateful because Jesus healed him. He took away his disease, his impurity and loneliness as an outcast. AND he was a Samaritan. But Jesus still healed him. He heard his cry for mercy, and he made him well. He said, Go and show the priest and get your life back. And Jesus didn't have to say that to this leper. He didn't have to do any of that healing. But he did. So that Samaritan SHOULD say thank you.

Of all people, this Samaritan has received something he doesn't deserve. A leper got little to no mercy from the world. No one wanted to take the chance. No one wanted their disease or their contamination. So lepers didn't associate with anyone. They couldn't touch anyone or eat with anyone or worship with anyone or do business with anyone. A leper had

to stay away from everyone; and they had to make noise and shout so people could stay out of their way. LEPER. LEPER, they had to shout. UNCLEAN. UNCLEAN. That's all they could do, is shout at people. All they could do is cry out for mercy. And they might as well cry out for mercy from Jesus. It's a long shot, but what do they have to lose. But if you know Jesus, you know that Jesus can't refuse a request for mercy. He can't refuse us when we ask for help, when we ask for grace, when we ask to be made well. Because that's all Jesus wants for us. That's what Jesus has come to do for us. He has come to give us life and to give it to us abundantly. He has said, ask and you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and the door will be open. The lepers ask for mercy from Jesus. And Jesus says: Coming right up. His mercy is mercy after all.

He says to them: Go and show yourselves to the priest. And in that instant, as they turn to go, they see that their leprosy is gone. The sores are gone. The rashes are gone. The blisters, the scaliness and bruising and oozing. It's gone and it's a miracle. They have to go to the priests as Jesus has instructed them. To the priest, and then to their homes, and

then to their new lives. There they go. But one former leper turns around. He knows how divine and holy and unexpected this is. Jesus didn't have to do this for him. He didn't have to hear him. He didn't have to heal him. He didn't have to give him life again. But he did. And he has to say thank you for it.

Ten lepers are healed. But only one comes back to say thank you. And he was a Samaritan. Imagine that. He was an outsider, a foreigner, a stranger to God. Jesus didn't have to help him. He wasn't part of the club. He wasn't part of God's group. He was a Samaritan. But THIS Samaritan turns around when no one else does and says thank you. And we can hear the gospel writer Luke saying in the background: Isn't that just the way it is? The one we don't expect does the right thing. The one we count out counts himself in and proves our prejudice wrong. He reminds us that 90% of the time, WE take life for granted. 90% of the time WE fail to appreciate God's gifts. 90% of the time, we don't give thanks to God for what God has done. We take the mercy and the grace, and we hurry away. Glad to have our lives, glad to survive, glad to get

things back to normal. And we don't stop or turn around. Or go back to Jesus to say thank you for what you have done.

As followers of Jesus, we should know better. We should know that when we ask for mercy, Jesus has never refused us yet. And we all have received grace upon grace. And so we should be the best at saying thank you. We should be the best at praising God and expressing our gratitude. Because we know when only one shows up, Jesus is asking "Where are the other nine? Where are the others that I healed? Where are the others who asked for mercy and received it? Where are those I blessed and redeemed and saved? Were none of the others found to praise God, 90% of them, except this foreigner?"

We've got to flip the story. We've got to make it our goal to flip the statistics. Instead of 1 in 10 being grateful, what if 9 out of 10 of us were? What if we could take nine out of ten thoughts in our heads and turn them into praise. Nine out of ten words of gratitude. Nine out of ten thoughts of appreciation. Because God has heard our cry for mercy. God has helped us. God has strengthened us in body and spirit and made us well. Even though we might not be Jesus' first people, or his original

people or his most obedient people or his most loving people, Jesus still has mercy on us. We who had nothing but death in front of us, now have life. And everything, everything now feels like a gift.

I want us to say thank you to Jesus tonight. For being gathered as God's church. For the songs we get to sing together. And prayers we pray together. Let's say thank you for it all, and get our praise to 90% instead of 10%.

Let's be grateful people and say thank you for the beautiful things like fall colors and frosty mornings and pink sunsets. And then say thank you for the ugly things and messy things that teach us that love is more than skin deep. We say it together, repeat after me: thank you, God.

We say thank you for the joyful things, like birthdays and weddings and graduations, and for the sad things that break our hearts and teach us the cost of faithfulness. We say it together: thank you God.

We say thank you for the wins and the triumphs and the times we came out on top. And we say thank you for the times we failed so we could learn to be gracious and humble. We say it together: thank you God.

We say thank you for our families and friends who are with us on life's journey. And we say thank you for the times we are alone and all we have is God to lean on. We say it together: thank you God.

We say thank you for every blessing, for food, and clean water and a place to live free from war and violence. And we say thank you for the times when we see life without them so we know how precious they are. We say it together: thank you God.

We say thank you for music and art and poetry and the joyful noise we can make. And for the silence when we wait for God in stillness. We say it together: thank you God.

We say thank you for education and knowledge, for science and discovery and understanding. And for mysteries and ambiguities and secrets that teach us to be patient. We say it together: thank you, God.

We say thank you for the breath in our lungs, for the blood in our veins, for the movement of our bodies and for the tenderness of our hearts and the sensitivity of our spirits and the logic of our minds. And for the moment when all of that ceases to be and we surrender ourselves to God's eternal embrace. We say it together: thank you God.

For every bit of mercy. For all the grace that is there for the asking. For all we don't deserve and have yet been freely given. Let us stop and turn around and go back and offer praise and gratitude to our Lord and 9 times out of 10 say it with all our hearts: together, one more time, thank you God.