

Thanksgiving Message for 2011**Luke 17:11-19*****Being Thankful*****The Rev. Dr. R. K. Miller**

His name was Rudyard Kipling who lived from 1865 to 1936. English, yet born in Bombay, India, he had a gift for writing and he shared it. His books included "Captain Courageous," "How the Leopard Got His Spots," and "The Jungle Books."

His writings made him famous and brought him a fortune. A newspaper reporter came up to him once and said, "Mr. Kipling, I just read that somebody calculated that the money you make from your writings amounts to over one hundred dollars a word." The reporter reached into his pocket and pulled out a one hundred-dollar bill and gave it to Kipling and said, "Here's a one hundred dollar bill, Mr. Kipling. Now you give me one of your hundred dollar words." Kipling looked at the money, put it in his pocket and said, "Thanks!"

The word "thanks" is certainly a one hundred dollar word. For some it's more like a million-dollar word. It's small but powerful. It's only 6 letters but offers a life-giving message that few words are able to do.

Thanks!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Sometime we miss the opportunity to share that word at the right time with the right people because we are focused on something else.

A mother and her young son were at a farm market one Saturday morning. One of the vendors gave the little boy an orange. His mother said, "Now what do you say?" The boy looked at the orange, looked up to the man, then handed the orange back to the man and said, "Peel it, please?"

Have you said "thanks" to anyone lately?

A woman was having a really bad day. It was pouring down rain and the kids missed the bus so she had to drive them to school. That made her late for work, which meant it made her late getting out of work. She had to stop by the grocery store on the way home to pick up a few things because guests were coming for dinner. It was still raining as she pulled into the parking lot at the grocery store. The place was packed so she offered a prayer saying, "God please just let me find a parking place quickly." She looked over and a car was pulling out of the spot closest to the door. She said, "Never mind God, something just opened up."

I don't know about you but I believe God deserves more thanks than most of us are willing to give.

In our house we try to teach our children to say thanks especially to God. At meal time we often pray, “God is great! God is good and we thank him for our food. By his grace we shall be fed, give us Lord our daily bread. Amen.” Sometimes we say that prayer and I wonder do I really live that way. Am I truly thankful? Sometimes I will say that prayer, stop, and realize that I didn’t pray it, I just said it. Then I say thanks and really mean it.

At bed time Amber and I will often ask our children, “So what do you want to thank God for tonight?” They will think for a moment and then often respond, “everything.” They want to cover all their bases. So we pray a prayer thanking God for everything that God has given to us and done for us that day.

What if... tomorrow comes the only things you get to keep are the things you had thanked God for today? Of course it doesn’t work that way but what if...

“Thanks” it’s a powerful, life-changing word.

Our reading from Luke is a powerful, life-changing word too. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. That means he is headed to the cross. And we know what Jesus did for us on the cross. Can I have a “Thank you Jesus”?

He comes into a village where his reputation precedes him. Ten guys with leprosy spot Jesus, call out to him, yet keep their distance from him. They call him by name saying, “Jesus, Master have mercy on us.” They were supposed to yell – “Unclean! Unclean!” But they yell, “Jesus, Master have mercy on us.”

The Bible says: The name of Jesus is the name above all names and call on the name of the Lord and you will be saved. Calling Jesus “Master” means they put Jesus in charge of their lives. Saying “Have mercy on us” means they turned to Jesus for help in their time of need to help them feel human again.

Leprosy:

- it was repulsive to all who saw the person
- it was incurable by human means
- it was isolating - lepers were confined outside the city limits - many times to the city dump - probably because they could find food and other things there.
- it would cause you to become unclean ceremonially if you touched a leper (even if you didn’t catch the disease).
- it was the physical counterpart to the spiritual problem of sin. It was the model disease for sin. That is why when a leper is healed it is called a cleansing instead of a healing.
- When a leper was healed he was to go to the priest and be pronounced clean before reentering society.

Jesus looks at them and tells them to go and show themselves to the priests. There is no judgment, no “do this first,” Jesus simply says – “go...” The only reason you

would go to a priest was to show him you were clean. And as they go they were made clean. A miracle.

One, and only one, sees that he is healed and does a U-turn, runs back to Jesus and gives thanks to God. He falls at Jesus' feet and prostrates himself, in other words he worshipped Jesus. He thanks Jesus. He can see that Jesus is no ordinary person. Jesus can do things that only God can do.

Jesus asks, to no one in particular, "Were not 10 made clean? The other nine, where are they?" Well... they are doing what Jesus told them to do. They are on their way to show the priests so they can get on with their lives. That's the problem – it appears they just want get on with their lives without saying thanks to Jesus.

But this foreigner, a Samaritan, an unchurched person has no reason to go show the priests. He has no need for the priests because he has Jesus. Jesus says to him "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well." Not just clean but well. Physically well and spiritually well. Jesus has healed him physically and his faith in God healed him spiritually. His life is forever changed because he said thanks to Jesus.

The other nine miss out on the spiritual healing. They will probably go back to life as it was before, same old - same old. But not this guy. He is a changed man on outside and on the inside. Life for him will never be the same. He experienced a God moment and will live his life with a thankful heart. God moments will do that to you.

My hope is that you will experience a God moment here tonight. Why, because all of us suffer from some form of leprosy. An uncleanness called sin that keeps us separated from friends and family. We all need to be made clean – forgiven of our sins.

We debated about offering Communion here tonight and then decided we would because this meal is also called the Eucharist - a thanksgiving meal of bread and wine. Eucharist in Greek means "giving thanks." As you come forward I invite you to say "Thanks" to Jesus as you take the bread and the wine. Then return to your seat to give thanks and praise and glory to God. Saying thanks is such a simple thing but it is so life-giving.

I was at the hospital this morning. My wife left me a message on my phone. She thanked me for getting the turkey ready for her to cook this morning. She hates touching a raw turkey. It's too icky... Can I tell you how those words of thanks from her lifted my spirits all day long? I couldn't wait to share that story with you here tonight.

We gather here tonight to say thanks to Jesus who says to us "Get up and go on your way your faith has made you well." I hope you hear Jesus say that to you here tonight...

I have just one more thing to say, Thanks. Amen.