

When you were a kid, there were probably a lot of small lessons or phrases your parents taught you. Basic life lessons that you've hopefully been practicing ever since. Things like, "Look both ways before crossing the street," or, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all." At the dinner table, you might have been told on multiple occasions, "Eat your vegetables." There are probably two more phrases that almost every parent teaches their children to say: please and thank you. When they ask for something, a person isn't supposed to say, "Give me that!" or, "I want that!", but instead, "Please, may I have this?" The other phrase, "thank you", is a phrase we use all the time. Whenever someone gives you something, or does something for you, or says something nice about you, it's polite to respond by saying thank you. Please and thank you are two valuable phrases that everybody should learn to use, especially when talking with God. For our sermon study this morning, we have an account from the life of Jesus where a group of men in a very bad situation knew how to ask for help from the Savior, but only one of them came back to say thank you. We read this morning from Luke 17:11-19:

*Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."*

When this account takes place, Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem for the last time. He was on His way to be betrayed, publicly executed, and to feel exactly what hell is like in order to pay for the sins of the entire world. But even though He was on a mission, that doesn't mean that He didn't have time to stop in order to have compassion on some people who desperately needed His help.

Of all the people in the world who might need physical healing, these ten men who met Jesus perhaps needed it the most. What they had wasn't the flu, pneumonia, strep throat, or even cancer. Back around the time of the first century when Jesus lived, leprosy was just about the worst thing you could have. At the time of Jesus' life, there was no cure for leprosy. It would start with patches of skin having no sensitivity to temperature or pain. This, along with the poor sanitation of the first century, meant that it was very easy for wounds or sores to go unnoticed

and get infected. Eventually, this would result in extensive limb damage, severe infections, and death. Leprosy was a disease that guaranteed to kill you, and it would be sure to do it slowly.

Besides the physical side of the disease, leprosy was especially disastrous for the Jewish people. According to Old Testament laws given to Moses for the children of Israel, any person that had leprosy had to be separated from the rest of society and live with other people that had leprosy outside of the city. If you came down with leprosy, this meant you had to leave your job. You had no way to earn any kind of living. It meant you had to leave your family behind, if they hadn't already been infected as well. For your spiritual life, you wouldn't be able to go worship at the temple, and you were considered an unclean person. This disease was something that turned your entire life upside down. It took everything away from you, until the only thing you had left to look forward to was death.

That was the situation of the ten men that approached Jesus. In fact, they couldn't even approach Him. They had to stand a ways away and shout at Jesus to have mercy upon them. These men knew that Jesus was the only hope they had left. He was the only chance for them to live anything close to a normal life.

By this time in Jesus' work of preaching, people had taken notice of Him. All around Israel and Judea, He had performed many, many miracles of healing. He had given blind people their sight back. He had made crippled people walk again. He had ordered demons to come out of people who were possessed. During His lifetime, Jesus would even raise three people from the dead. It's not hard to see how His reputation preceeded Him and He became something of a celebrity to the people. These ten men with leprosy knew that if there was anyone who could cure them, it was going to be Jesus.

What these men were asking for wasn't a small thing. Like I mentioned before, leprosy didn't have a cure at the time of Jesus. Outside of a miracle, all of these men were guaranteed to die. However, they had confidence that Jesus was capable of doing the impossible. They knew that nothing was too big to ask from Him.

Is there anything in our lives that we think is too big for our God to handle? Have any of you ever thought, "I know, I know, 'With God, nothing is impossible,' but this is really impossible. God can't or won't make this happen for me, so I'm not even going to bother to ask"? Or is it the other way around? Is there something so little in your life, something so insignificant that you think it's not even worth bothering God about or mentioning in your prayers?

The point I'm trying to make is that we shouldn't hesitate to ask God for anything. Our God is the God who created the entire universe and everything in it, and the one who created

every living thing down to the tiniest cell. That same God is able to do anything for you. More than that, He wants you to ask for anything. Are you struggling with money? Are things not going well in your love life, your family life, or with your friends? It doesn't matter whether you think it's big or small, whether it's embarrassing to even think about, or whether you've been praying for it for a long time. God still wants you to ask, because He loves you and cares about you.

The greatest thing that God has done for us is something that we can't even see. Even better than any possessions, any amount of money, any friends or family He could give us is the forgiveness that God has given us through our Savior Jesus. Greater than any problem we could ever have, our sins are the burden that we can never get rid of, the disease that we can never cure ourselves from.

Leprosy was a disease you couldn't get rid of, but it could only kill you physically. Sin is a disease that also kills your soul. It separates you from God, so that when your body dies, both your body and soul are left to suffer and die forever in hell. When Jesus died on the cross for us all, He made it so we don't have to feel what hell is like. When He took away our sins, He made it so that we can ask God directly for forgiveness from our sins when we pray. And when we ask for that forgiveness, we know it is something that God will always give us because of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

That's not something that we can expect for everything we ask for, though. God wants us to ask for everything, but that doesn't mean that He's necessarily going to give us everything we ask for. Sometimes when we ask for something, God's answer is, "No, that isn't my plan for you. I have something else in mind." Other times, He tells us, "I'm going to give you what you ask for, but just not right now." No matter what God's answer is to our prayers, we know that His will is best for our lives. Better than we even know ourselves, God knows exactly what each of us need in our daily walk of life as well as our daily walk of faith. In James 1:17, we're told that, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." Every single good thing in our lives comes directly from our heavenly Father, even if what God gives us doesn't seem very good to us.

No matter what God decides to give us, we ought to give thanks for what He sends us, because we know that it is all part of His plan for our lives. For the ten men with leprosy from our sermon text this morning, God's answer to them was, "Yes, and I'll give you what you want right now." Jesus told them to go to the Jewish priests in Jerusalem in order to be declared clean.

This sort of “all-clear” from the priest was the only way that someone with leprosy could return to their normal lives in their family, in society, and in their worship at the temple. As those ten men walked, the miraculous happened. The impossible became a reality. Their wounds and every other sign of leprosy vanished. Just at Jesus’ word, they were made entirely healthy.

Those ten men had begged and pleaded with Jesus to heal them, as their last hope in a very desperate situation. Jesus had delivered in the best way possible. What sort of reaction do you think you would have had in their situation? I think mine would have been a sudden and exhaustive rush of relief and happiness. These men could return to their families. They could return to their friends, their jobs, to society. If something this fantastic had been done for you, what sort of reaction would you have? It goes back to those two phrases that all parents teach their children: please and thank you. If you ask someone to do a miracle and give you your entire life back, and they actually do it, who wouldn’t go back right away and tell them thank you? Who wouldn’t give them a hug and say, “Thank you for saving my life?”

Of the ten men that asked Jesus for that very thing, only one of them came back. Only one. Sure, Jesus had commanded them to show themselves to the temple priests at Jerusalem. But there was only one of them that thought, “God has truly done something wonderful for me. The temple can wait. I have to go and say thank you first.”

Think of your life. Which one of those men with leprosy are you? All of us want to be the one that came back and thanked Jesus for what God had done for him. However, we know that more often we are the one of the nine who ask and ask from God, but often don’t come back to thank Him. Or how often do we complain about the things God has put into our lives, rather than thanking Him for all the blessings we have. The greater point is that we often know very well how to say please, but so seldom say thank you.

That one Samaritan who had been cured of his leprosy returned because the most important thing for him wasn’t getting back to his old life, but instead thanking the Man who had given him his life back.

Consider all the wonderful things God has put into your life, whether you asked for them or not. Family, friends, a husband or wife, material possessions. Also consider all the terrible things that you never see or even know about, because God keeps them out of your life. We know that the greatest gift God gives us, though, is forgiveness from our sins. God has taken our sins, the greatest problem we could ever have, and taken them away forever because of what Christ has done for us on the cross. Lamentations 3:22,23 talks about this when it says, “Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are

new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.” How can we not be thankful? How great is our God and Savior, who chose to love us first!

Please and thank you. They're two phrases that are easy to remember, but also easy to forget. May all of us remember to say please and thank you in our daily walk with God. Know that our God, the Maker and Creator of the entire universe, is able to and wants to put the best things in your life. Know that you can ask God for anything and everything, and if it is His will, He will give it to you. No matter what God gives you, though, may His great love move us to return and give thanks to Him. Know that even the difficult things, the heartbreak, the pain, the frustration, the sadness, and the loneliness all work together for the good of us His children. And because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we know that one day there will be an end to all of that pain and sadness. Above all other things, may we all thank God for giving heaven to us as a free gift, where we will only know happiness, peace, and joy. Amen.