**Small Group Sermon Study Guide**

When God’s Story Becomes Your Story: (4) You Give Thanks

**1/29/12 A.M.** Luke 17:11-19

1) *As they went, they were cleansed.*

Sometimes faith in Jesus brings an immediate healing or some other kind of blessing. In this story the blessing comes to the lepers as they obey Jesus. Their obedience to “go show themselves to the priest” also embodies their faith in Jesus word, even though they had not yet been cleansed. As they obey they receive the blessing.

What spiritual value can we learn from this?

2) *Where are the other nine?* (*v 17)* After this story, Jesus continues to heal people even

 Though he continues to encounter the ungrateful. (Read also Luke 6:3-36, and quote

 sheet: *God is a Giver*) Why?

If nine out of ten fail to return to say thanks it reveals that ingratitude is a widespread spiritual problem. In your opinion, why is ungratefulness such a problem? (See quote sheet, “*One Life Loss”* and “*An Act of Humilty”* for possible reasons)

3) *And he was a Samaritan (v16)*

 Bible teacher Fred Craddock writes: “It is often the stranger in the church who

sings heartily the hymns which we have long left to the choir, who expresses gratitude for blessings we have not noticed, who listens attentively to the sermons we think we have already heard, who actively serves others instead of sending in a small donation.”

Have you ever noticed what Craddock observed? Why do the strangers/Samaritans appreciate what we take for granted?

3) *Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? (v18)*

Tom Wright points out that the Jews are named after *Judah*, whose name means “This time I will praise the Lord.” Peter says that the church is a royal priesthood that “declares the praise” of Him who calls us out of darkness into his wonderful light. So priests not only display God’s character to the world, they also gratefully declare God’s saving acts before God.

Share with your group some good thing God has done for you.

 What steps can we take to make gratitude a habit? (see quote sheet: *Places to See Before You Die)*

***Quote Sheet***

***God is a Giver***

We can’t earn anything from God… God needs nothing, and all things, including all the work we could ever do for God are God’s gifts to us in the first place. So God doesn’t pay givers; God gives to givers. The fact that God gives to them in response to their giving and that God gives them more than they give to others---that God gives them, as Jesus says, “a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over” (Luke 6:38)—doesn’t turn their giving into earning. True, we often treat God’s gifts as payment for services rendered. But when we do, we fundamentally misconstrue God’s relationship to us and mistreat God’s gifts. God is not an employer, not even a very generous employer. God is a giver.

--Miroslav Volf, ***Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in Culture Stripped of Grace,*** *105*

***One life loss***

One life-loss can infect the whole of a life. Like a rash that wears through our days, our sight becomes peppered with black voids. Now everywhere we look, we only see all that isn’t: holes, lack, deficiency.

--Ann Voskamp, ***One Thousand Gifts,*** @3%

***An act of humility***

Gratitude is always an act of humility. Baptist preacher Joel Gregory writes that when the Masai tribe of West Africa express thanks, they put their foreheads on the ground and say, “My head is in the dirt.” Members of another tribe express gratitude by sitting for a long while in front of the person to whom they are indebted and then say, “I sit on the ground before you.’

--John Ortberg, ***When the Game is Over It all Goes Back in the Box,*** *150*

***Places to see before you die***

The woman besides me reads, and I read her title in the reflection of the mirror: *1000 Places to See Before You Die.* Is that it? Are there physical places that simply must be seen before I stop breathing within time, before I inhale eternity?

Why? To say that I’ve had reason to bow low? To say that I’ve seen beauty? To say that I’ve been arrested by wonder? Isn’t it here? Can’t I find it here?....

Is the height of my dependence on the depths of my thanks? ….As long as thanks is possible, then Joy always possible. Joy is always possible…the joy could be here! Here, in the messy, piercing ache of now, joy might be—unbelievably possible. The only place we need see before we die is this place of seeing God, here and now.

--Ann Voskamp, ***One Thousand Gifts,*** *@9-10%*

***Gratitude Bestows Reverence***

Gratitude bestows reverence, allowing us to encounter everyday epiphanies, those transcendent moments of awe that change forever how we experience life and the world.

--Sarah Ban Breathnach, quoted in ***One Thousand Gifts,*** *@14%*