

“A Thanksgiving Meditation”

Martin Luther, the founder of the Protestant Reformation, once said, “The greater God’s gifts, the less they are regarded.”

This is true. The more we have, the more we experience God’s blessings in our lives, the harder time we have in acknowledging those blessings.

In short, we take too many things for granted.

There is a story about a writer named Robert Hill who once took a trip to Thailand with his wife.

One day they took a taxi do some sight seeing. While riding in the car the taxi driver asked them where they were from. Dr. Hill told him they were from Richmond, Virginia.

The driver replied, “Oh, you’re a rich man!”

Dr. Hill said, “No, we are not rich.” Then the driver asked, “Do you own a car?” Dr. Hill said, “Yes, we own two cars.” Then he asked, “Do you own a house?” “Yes, we own a modest house with 10 rooms.” The driver was amazed, for his house only had two rooms. Then the driver asked, “Do you have a family?” Dr. Hill replied, “Yes, we have four healthy children.”

The driver then replied, “Ah, Dr. Hill, you are a rich man!”

The author and his wife laughed. They knew the taxi driver was right. They were rich, but were they thankful?

In our gospel reading tonight we have a story about ten lepers who encounter Jesus while he is on his way to Jerusalem.

It is apparent from the story that nine of the lepers were Jewish and one was a Samaritan foreigner.

Jews and foreigners did not normally associate with one another, but when you had leprosy, a dreaded and ostracizing disease in the day of Jesus, you were all lumped together in the same group.

These ten lepers came as close to Jesus as they could and they cried out to him for mercy and healing.

Jesus, in testing their faith, told them to go show themselves to the priest.

That’s what you did if your disease had cleared up; you went to the priest and he would then pronounce you clean and free to intermingle with society again. These men were not healed until after they began their journey.

All ten men took Jesus at his word and did as they were commanded. All ten exercised their faith and were healed, but only one of them came back to give thanks to Jesus for what he had done.

That one person was the Samaritan. He was less privileged than the other men. The Samaritans were a minority frowned upon by the majority Jews.

In terms of God's revelation to people the Samaritans given less than the Jews.

They were not the people that God had chosen to bring the Savior into the world through.

They did not have the whole OT (only the first five books of the Law), and they did not have the Temple in Jerusalem. In terms of truth, they had less revelation. And though the Jews had the fullness of God's revelation, they, for the most part, rejected Jesus as Messiah.

That is the irony of the story. The Samaritan had less going for him and the other nine men, yet he was the only one to come back and thank Jesus for what he had done for him.

The word from God for us tonight is not to bemoan that we ought to have it worse so that we can be more grateful, but simply to be reminded by the Lord through the scriptures that we have much to be thankful for tonight, especially the cup of salvation.

As the Psalmist said, let us "lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord."

As we come to the table let us be thankful for the broken body and spilt blood of Jesus.

Nobody else would ever do that for us but God.

Paul tells us in Romans that if we were lucky a good man might be willing to die for us, but God who is rich in mercy sent his Son Jesus into the world to die for sinners.

The hard facts of the Gospel are that because of our sin we are/were the enemies of God.

Our sin alienates us from the Father and His ways, and because of that we are deserving of God's judgment, yet Paul tells us that "Christ died for the ungodly" and that "while we were still sinners Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:6-8)

This is the simple message of the gospel and tonight the table of thanksgiving proclaims that to us and calls us to embrace the gospel of Jesus in faith, with sincere and grateful hearts.

Amen.