

The Grateful Dead

Big Idea: The secret to receiving and continuing in the abundant life God has for us is an attitude of gratitude.

Before we come to Christ we are spiritual zombies, the walking dead. While there may be breath in our lungs, there is no life in our spirits. *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved* (Ephesians 2:4,5).

The ten lepers illustrated that hopeless state without Christ. Not only were their spirits dead, their bodies were already decaying. Leprosy was the most feared disease of their day: contagious, with no cure, and hideously disfiguring. Once lepers were diagnosed they were told to dress in rags and keep their hair disheveled so people could identify them from a long way off. As if that wasn't enough, they were ordered to call out "unclean, unclean" if any passersby came too close. This was their so-called life - abhorrence, rejection, and a slow, painful, lonely death.

1. Grave Situation

On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Luke 17:11-13

Desperate times call for desperate measures. They must have heard about Jesus, about His healing power and His merciful nature. With nothing left to lose they cried out for help. While they respectfully kept their distance, just asking for help was against social protocol. Most of the disadvantaged were free to beg for support, but lepers weren't allowed to approach anyone. Besides, their situation was beyond help or hope – they already had one foot in the grave. Sometimes, we can relate to that sense of hopelessness. Our disease may not be physical, but spiritual dis-ease still cries out for a cure.

2. Gracious Intervention

When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. Luke 17:14

In the same way disobedience to God leads to death, obedience to God leads to life. Often Jesus will ask us to take a simple step of faith to see if we really do trust Him. It was Jewish custom for those who were recovering from a disease to show themselves to a priest for verification (Leviticus 13-14). They were on their way when God's grace intervened.

3. Grateful Celebration

Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Luke 17:15,16

The attitude of gratitude puts everything into perspective: it replaces enmity with identity, pride with humility, self-sufficiency with submission, blame with blessing, complaining with compassion, panic with peace, and fear with faith.

4. Greater Consecration

Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well. Luke 17:17-19

Thanksgiving and praise is the doorway to God's presence and power (Psalm 100). Because the leper returned to thank Jesus He received complete healing for his body and soul, while the others missed out. What do you want to thank God for today?