

“Doxology”

Oct. 9th, 2022

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Wall Street United Church

Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Luke 17:11-19

It happened that as he made his way toward Jerusalem, he crossed over the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten men, all lepers, met him. They kept their distance but raised their voices, calling out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” Taking a good look at them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” They went, and while still on their way, became clean. One of them, when he realized that he was healed, turned around and came back, shouting his gratitude, glorifying God. He kneeled at Jesus’ feet, so grateful. He couldn’t thank him enough—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus said, “Were not ten healed? Where are the nine? Can none be found to come back and give glory to God except this outsider?” Then he said to him, “Get up. On your way. Your faith has healed and saved you.”

How many of you grew up going to church and singing the Doxology, or the old Psalm 100? Doxology comes from the Greek where “Doxa” means praise and “Logia” means ‘to give voice to’. So, the Doxology is giving voice to your praise. Here we are on Thanksgiving Sunday and part of the purpose of this holiday is to remember to give voice to our gratitude and praise.

When Jesus is travelling to Jerusalem he travels along the border between Samaria and Galilee. He travels on the edge — between those who are on the inside (his own country, people and religious group) and those who are on the outside. He travels between Jews living on this side of the border and Samaritans living on the other. It’s here along the edge where another division was obvious: between those who were clean and acceptable and healthy, living in their respective countries, and those who were unclean, contagious and undesirable. They lived in no man’s land —the border in between. While in this in-between place, Jesus meets ten people with a contagious skin disease. Ten who are cut off and separated from their families, from their people and their religion — but interestingly, 10 people who are together in their misery — *Jews and Samaritans together in this no man’s land!* There aren’t as many borders when you are outside the borders. The ten cry out for mercy. Jesus tells them to present themselves to their priests to be received back into community. So the ten run to

confirm what they already know — they are healed! But only one returns and gives thanks and praise to God. Jesus voices the question, **“Were not ten healed? Where are the other nine? Can none be found to come back and give glory to God except this outsider?”**

I feel like Jesus is asking a lot of these people who have suffered so much and for so long. I don't doubt that they were all thankful. How could they not be? They had a life sentence before — more like a death sentence. If the disease didn't get them, the extreme poverty, the isolation and exposure to the elements would kill them. It's pretty hard for us to imagine that level of suffering that is both extreme physical suffering and emotional — cut off from everyone you know and love. So, in that moment, having been given the gift of a second chance, it's understandable if writing a thank-you note wasn't the first thing on their mind or to-do list.

Reading this, you might hear the moral of the story sounding an awful lot like your mother saying “Now don't forget to say thank you!”

Thanksgiving is our annual reminder to say “Thank you.”

I like being around grateful people. They seem to be happier people. I miss Patricia Connolly — she was a member who came mostly to our evening service and she had her struggles (one of them, believing that the pop, Fanta, was an acceptable food group!) but she oozed gratitude. She would marvel at the simplest things: the way the sandwiches were beautifully arranged on a plate for a funeral, a beautiful magazine cover or a peony flower (even better, beautiful peonies on a magazine cover!) or the amazing view from her apartment, of the church gymnasium roof. She was someone who voiced her praise often.

I'm not always so good at that. I wish I was better. But there's a part of me that finds this annual reminder annoying and forced. There are times when I don't feel so grateful. It's been a hard few years and so many are struggling. Still I am aware of the blessings around me. In a world where so many struggle with physical and mental health, with finances, with broken relationships, and I could go on ... I am aware of the blessings of faith, of family, of meaningful employment, of health...

Here at the church I so often marvel at the good work that is done in and through this church. I think of the Indigenous sub-committee that did so much to bring us an informative speaker. I think of the people who do Sunday Suppers — preparing to serve 300 people free of charge this afternoon. I think of our staff and leaders who go above and beyond the call of duty all the time. I think of the team in the booth, the members of the band. I think of everyone who sits on a committee. (And “sit” is a funny word because apart from the actual meeting there is not a lot of sitting that

happens in this church!) It is amazing. So thank you! Thank you for serving. Thank you.

I should say thank you more often.

I think I am a grateful person but I don't always *feel* grateful and I don't often give voice to my gratitude.

Why was the Samaritan able to give voice to his gratitude? He was blessed with eyes to see beyond himself. Somehow, this Samaritan who wasn't from the 'right' country and didn't get the 'right' religious education was able to see more than him — he was able to see God. I'm being a bit cheeky saying he didn't have the right religious education, because even though Jesus was from a particular place and tribe he went to and across the border often and intentionally. Jesus was the fullness of God in human form, and you can never contain the fullness of that love to one group or way of thinking.

But I don't think Jesus' question was a "Now don't forget to say thank you!" finger wagging at us, and especially not at people who had suffered so much. I don't think it was judgement so much as *sadness* — *sadness that of the ten who were healed, only one glimpsed the giver behind the gift.* The one, the Samaritan, ran back, knelt down, and praised God. He recognized the Kingdom of God was right there in this man Jesus, and that he, he of all people had been seen, touched, healed and filled with the life of God. Each was healed physically, but in that moment only the Samaritan was healed in body *and spirit*. **"Your faith has healed and saved you."** Saved from suffering, but even more — saved to know that there is more to life than this – the things we have and the things we don't.

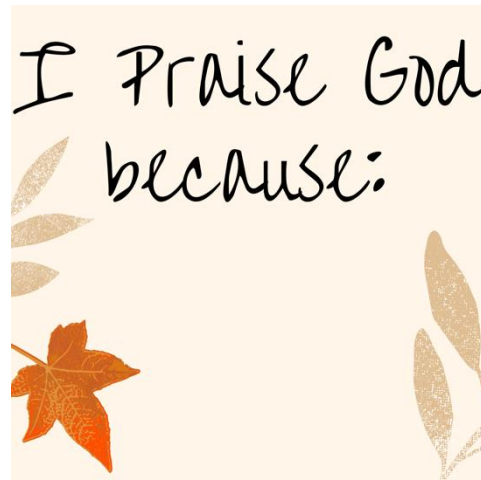
The Samaritan was able to see God — to stop and wonder at the healing power and wonder how it was that he was the recipient of so awesome a love. As he let those thoughts come into his mind, he was flooded with praise. He knelt at Jesus' feet and he gave glory to God.

This is Thanksgiving weekend. We should be aware of the blessings that surround us every day. Having a day, a holiday, set aside to remind us to take stock of those blessings is important. So do that. As the song at the beginning spoke; "Count your blessings, name them one by one". But just as much, perhaps more, take a moment to "let in the holy." That will change you. That will sustain you in the struggles you are going through and give you eyes and a heart for those on the outside. Letting in the wonder and the holy will change you.

I want you now, while Samia plays the reflection song, to give voice to your thanks and praise. Take the time to think about and to say 'thank you'.

“I am grateful for...” List the blessings in your life, big or really small. “I praise God because...” Let in the holy— let the focus be on God, not you. So you might write “I praise God because God is love” or “because God is my shelter in the storm.”

Thanks be to God! Amen.



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