

# Give Thanks to God

by Erlo Stegen

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*Erlo Stegen's sermon emphasizes the importance of thankfulness, obedience, and faith in Jesus as the source of healing and spiritual cleansing.*

**Duration:** 1:06:21

**Scripture:** Matthew 8:1

**Topics:** "Thanksgiving"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of the leper who approached Jesus for healing in Matthew chapter 8. The preacher emphasizes the leper's unwavering faith and determination to reach Jesus, despite the hindrances and opinions of others. The preacher also references other biblical stories, such as Zacchaeus and the three men in the fiery furnace, to highlight the importance of prioritizing God's will above all else. The sermon encourages listeners to examine their own lives and consider if they are truly living in accordance with God's will.

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## Transcript

Let's pray. Thank you Lord for this opportunity to meet in this way. We pray that you will be with us now.

We pray that you will work in a wonderful way through testimony and through the preaching of your word. Please bless this hour Lord. Amen.

Our text we find in Matthew chapter 8 from verse 1. And when he had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And behold, a leper came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean. Then Jesus put out his hand and touched him, saying, I am willing, be cleansed.

Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, see that you tell no one, but go your way, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded as a testimony to them. Thus far.

I thought I would speak about all the verses up to the 13th verse. But when I read again this morning, I got to the 4th verse and I couldn't carry on. Just because there was just so much already contained in these verses.

It says when he had come down from the mountain. Jesus had been on the mount where he gave a sermon on the mount in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. This is the most powerful sermon ever preached. But also a

very difficult passage if you read it.

And that's where Jesus also said that if you look at another woman, if you're married and you look at another woman and lust after her, you have already committed adultery with her. Isn't that difficult, you men? You also said that if you get angry with your brother. And you call him a fool or other names.

You say then you deserve hell because before God, you've murdered him. Just by being at loggerheads with your brother and you call him names. Before God, you have murdered him.

It would be good if we would again and again read these words which the Lord spoke because the Lord expects us to live accordingly. That would be good if you go home, that you read chapter 5, 6 and 7 and then it was thereafter that he came down from the mountain. Remember the Lord also said that if someone asks you to walk a kilometer with him, then walk two with him.

He said if someone strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other cheek too. There's much we can learn there. If you have two coats and there's someone who doesn't have even one, then take the one and give it to the one who has none.

Read it prayerfully on your knees. And then ask yourself what kind of a life you live. And then it says when he had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

Now here when you look at the Greek word that they followed him means following him closely and in truth. There is however another word for following meaning just to mingle around him, to be with him, sometimes even ahead of him. But to follow him from behind in his footsteps.

So there are two ways of following the Lord. One being following him closely in his footsteps. The other one just being there around him.

Where you can even say you're following him because you're near him on this side or that side or even ahead of him. But here it speaks of following him closely in his footsteps. So we should ask ourselves do we follow him closely like this crowd was following closely in his footsteps.

And that we ask ourselves do we follow his words and do his words as he says or are we like those who built their house on sand. And when he had come down then it says behold. In other words there is something we need to be aware of and take note of.

Behold among this crowd was one who was leprous, a leper. Leprosy was a terrible disease viewed mostly as incurable. A leper at that time was a leper.

A leper was rejected even by his own family. You weren't allowed to be among your family or even among your own people. You were excommunicated.

You were sent outside staying alone in a remote place. Leprosy was not a disease. Leprosy was not just a terrible disease.

Leprosy was very infectious. You could be infected by a leper directly or indirectly just coming into contact that he's been in contact with. You were not allowed to have any contact with a leper.

You couldn't live together with a leper. And if you wanted to give him food, you would take his plate of food, leave it at a certain place on a rock or anywhere where he would then know he could go to later and

collect his food. So you were not allowed to.

A leper was not allowed to have contact with other people. It was a law. In history, they tell us that a disease once broke out among some people.

And the doctors tried to find a cure because they were desperate because it was so infectious being passed on from one to the other. But now here we find this leper in this throng, this multitude, suddenly here he appears, he wasn't even allowed to be there. It was a crime for him to be among those people.

Why was he there? Some believe that it was while he was preaching, he was in the distance listening to what is being said. And that he was touched by what he heard. He was so moved by what he heard that he made every effort to get to him to get his help.

Maybe he heard the Lord Jesus saying, he who asks will receive, he who knocks to him will be opened. So he lost no time, he made his way to Jesus. And that was his sole purpose and aim and goal is to get to Jesus.

He was not concerned about the other people, whether they'd reject him, allow him, give him permission. He just had one goal and that was to get to Jesus. Because people can be a hindrance, a danger to you when you start thinking, but what about so and so? What will he say? What will he think? He once said this and you think of what people will think of you.

But this leper was not concerned about the crowds, all those people. He had one goal and that was Jesus and to get to him. And that was his sole purpose and aim and goal is to get to Jesus.

And may God mean that to us. Like Zacchaeus, who also wanted to see Jesus, he wanted to see him so badly. When the crowd was in his way, he climbed into a tree like a child would do.

But he, as an important man, was not concerned what the people would think of him because his sole goal was to find Jesus. So when this man found Jesus, he threw himself at his feet, he worshipped him, fell at his feet. And he prayed, he said, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.

Leprosy was something defiled, something despised. Unclean, just like sin. And he said, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.

He came saying, Lord, if you are willing. He was seeking God's will. He knew God and Jesus had the power to heal him, but he said, Lord, if you are willing.

If it's your will. Some say, well, in other words, he was doubting if he said, if you are willing. He should have just said, Lord, make me clean.

I don't think it was a bad thing for him to say, Lord, if you are willing. I remember when Sister Forza was dying, an aunt, one of her aunts came. We were quite a few there and had prayed and said, Lord, if it's your will, then heal her.

And she said, no, you are wrong. If you say, Lord, if you are willing and if it's your will, you shouldn't say it like that. You should just say, Lord, make her well.

But it was interesting, and then at that time there was a vision that we were all seen together, praying, all looking in one direction, but one person among us was facing the other way. And she said, no, you mustn't

say, Lord, if you are willing. You must ask directly and say, Lord, make her well.

We cannot force God. We cannot demand from God and say, Lord, you've healed many people, so even now you must heal everyone. During the time of the Lord Jesus while he was on earth, someone was ill.

And they asked him to come. And he said to him, this disease is not unto death. So sometimes a sickness or illness leads to death.

So you cannot say that every illness, sickness is wrong, because there is a sickness unto death. If it's God's time to take you, don't go against him. It's always good when we pray that we pray and say, Lord, not our will but your will be done.

So this leper came and said, Lord, if you are willing, in other words, Lord, may your will be done in my life. And then immediately the Lord Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him. That's amazing.

He was an untouchable. No one was allowed to touch him. Because you would be infected by his disease.

But the amazing thing is, when the Lord Jesus touched him, that leprosy didn't affect the Lord Jesus, didn't enter him. He touched him, but he didn't get leprosy. Now if we look at this in a spiritual sense, and look at this leprosy being symbolic of sin, it would be a great blessing to us.

Jesus was among the sinners. In fact, the priests and the Sadducees and Pharisees, they accused him of that, of eating the sinners. But it's interesting that he was never affected or infected by their sin.

He never became leprous as a result. He was greater than leprosy. Leprosy had no power over him.

That is amazing. As the Lord Jesus came to this earth, he came to us sinners. But even though he comes into contact with us sinners, sin doesn't enter him.

But it's different with us people. When we are among people, we are influenced by them. We get the spirit that's in them and comes into us.

The Lord's Word says, Touch no unclean thing, come out from among them, and then I will be your God. 2 Corinthians 3, you'll read that. But Jesus touched him and said, be clean.

So he was unclean, but Jesus made him clean. He washed him clean from his sin. As he does even today when we come to him with our sin and we confess it, he cleanses us with his precious blood.

So even today, sin is like this leprosy. Come to Jesus, only he can help you from this leprosy. Perhaps you were also among people who weren't on the right track.

And what they said and shared influenced you and it stuck to you like a disease. Jesus answered them and said, I am willing. Be clean.

That's what Jesus came for, that we can be cleansed from our sin. No matter what disease it is. Jesus came to save sinners.

But even though he was among them, he ate with them, but he was never influenced by their sin. And then Jesus said to him, see that you tell no one. Go your way, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded as a testimony to them.

Why did Jesus say to him, go and tell no one? One would think that he should have gone out and shouted from the mountain tops that Jesus had healed him and saved him. But doesn't the Bible also say that we should go out and testify? But Jesus said, tell no one. That can have different reasons.

One reason may be that someone can go and tell no one. Or he may go out and testify and tell everyone about what has happened. But then he may backslide and he goes back to his old sin and then people will say, just look at him.

He says he's a Christian, look at him now. And Jesus did say that he who is ashamed of me, I will be ashamed of him. But to this person, this man, he said, don't tell anyone.

Tell no one, why? Mark gives us the answer. Mark 1 verse 45. Mark 1 verse 45, it says here that however, he went out and began to proclaim it freely.

The Lord Jesus said, Jesus said specifically to him, see. In other words, he wanted him to take note. But some people see and yet don't see.

They hear and yet they don't hear. And Mark here then says, this man went out, he proclaimed it freely and spread the matter. Is that wrong? Is it wrong? No.

Was it wrong? Yes, it was wrong because Jesus said specifically that he shouldn't do it because he disobeyed. Don't forget what Jesus has said to you. Even if it's long ago.

Don't forget it. And it says here that as a result of him proclaiming it freely and spreading the matter, the result was that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city. He could no longer publicly enter the city but was outside in deserted places.

Jesus was going towards the city and then this happened and this man came. Jesus said, see, but he didn't see. So because he went out testifying and speaking what the Lord Jesus had told him clearly not to do, it hindered the Lord that he could no longer enter openly.

They opposed Jesus as a result. They rejected him. They accused him of not keeping the law and the law of Moses.

And so Jesus couldn't enter the city openly anymore. He had to stay in deserted places. It's sad when we who are Christians who have been helped by the Lord become a problem in this way.

Jesus wanted to work but he was hindered and obstructed by this man whom Jesus had helped. We always need to carefully listen to what the Lord is saying to us. And that we diligently follow and obey what he is saying.

We need to take note of it. This person had to go. Jesus had said, go to the priests, show yourself to them.

That they can examine you. Many people say, why? Why must we go to a priest? We are Christians. We follow the Lord.

We don't need a priest in the process. Even confession of sin. Why do you need to go to another person for confession? Some people go as far as to say that confession of sin is wrong.

Or not necessary. I don't need to go into that. But the Bible is full of that.

The Lord Jesus even told his disciples before he left this earth, saying that I give you power and whom you forgive will be forgiven. And if you don't forgive someone, he won't be forgiven. But there are people who though they read the Bible, they don't see.

Some people say, well if the Bible says you must confess your sins one to another, that means you can just go to anybody. Now how they'll let anybody be able to help you? It ends up with the blind leading the blind and they'll both fall into the ditch. Elijah prayed and for three and a half years it didn't rain.

Then he prayed again and it rained thereafter. The Bible says that the prayer of a righteous man avails much. And has power.

The Bible says that the prayer of a righteous man avails much. If you go to someone and you say I want to confess that I have evil thoughts, they trouble me. And then that person you've gone to says, oh brother, I have the same problem, I'm also troubled by these things, that's my weakness as well.

If you're a blind person, how are you going to help another blind person? If you're a slave to sin, how will you help someone else who's enslaved to sin? Here in this portion it repeats and says, behold, see, there's something the Lord Jesus wants us to see. It was good though that this man came to Jesus. In the Old Testament, chronicles 16, verse 12, it speaks of King Asa.

It was in the 39th year of his reign. He became very ill, he had a disease in his feet. It was a serious disease.

But he did not seek the Lord, even in his disease, but sought the physicians or even the witch doctors. And God struck him and he died. See, he became ill, he was diseased, but he did not go to the Lord, he did not seek the Lord, but sought the physicians.

In the Old Testament it says, behold, see, there's something the Lord Jesus wants us to see. And even if it is a doctor, when you get sick, your first reaction shouldn't be, let me go to the doctor, but seek first the Lord before you seek a doctor. That's what happened to him.

I don't have anything against medical doctors, they can be of great help. However, I do have a problem with those who use suspect things in their medicine when they start using other things and using spiritism and things that is connected to it. So don't be like this king who, when he became diseased in his feet, he sought the physicians, he did not seek God.

So when you get ill, first seek God before you seek out a medical doctor. Remember the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When they stood before Nebuchadnezzar, their crime at that time was that they hadn't bowed to this image which he had set up.

And he said, why don't you bow down to this image of me? And I said, oh king, we cannot bow to this image, this statue. And I said, God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. But even if he does not deliver us, let it be known to your king that we will not serve your gods nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.

And Nebuchadnezzar became furious, the expression on his face even changed and he told his men, commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than usual. But these men said, we can be delivered by our God from this furnace, from this fire, but even if not, we don't care, we won't bow down. And then Nebuchadnezzar said, heat it up seven times more.

He was very, very angry. The expression of his face changed. He was furious.

And they said, if God wants to save us, he can save us. If he doesn't want, then it's okay. His will be done.

They did not say God will save us, we won't be burned by that fire or consumed by it. He said, he can deliver us from that furnace, but even if he doesn't, we will not bow to that image. So for them, God's will was supreme.

They bowed to that. And Nebuchadnezzar commanded that his strongest men take them and cast, throw them into the furnace. And those men who threw them into the furnace, they were consumed by the fire.

And it says that those men, those three men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and they were cast into the midst of the burning, fiery furnace. And then the king was astounded. He said, but didn't we throw three men into the furnace? But now I see a fourth man.

It's wonderful to be faithful to the Lord and to trust him. And God honored that and he said, well, he is willing to go into that furnace with them. And as he said, be cleansed.

And those mighty men of Allah who had to cast them into the furnace, they should have spoken up and said, oh, king, we cannot execute your command. It's not right. But it ended up in their death.

Now, time is up. I'm sorry. But let me just close with this.

Jesus said to him, go to the priest. He went to the priest. But after he had already spread the matter.

He said, go to the priest. And then offer the gift that Moses commanded as a testimony. In other words, when God has helped you, when he saved you, never forget to bring that gift of thanks to him.

Unthankfulness is a great sin. If you do not thank God, he will hand you over to sin. In Romans one, it speaks of homosexual relationships, lesbians, homosexuals.

And he says, they've become that because they did not give thanks to God. Today then. The intellectuals, they say, oh, that's a person is born that way.

That's nonsense. God created a man to be a man and a woman to be a woman. And Adam married Eve.

Men married a woman. They ended up in that state because they did not thank God. Never forget to thank God for what he's done for you, lest he hands you over to sin, ending up in that terrible state.

If you think of these homosexual relationships, when you say you're going to come home with someone and your partner or whatever, and he's the same sex as you, that's something you found in Sodom and Gomorrah. So if Jesus has helped you, never forget to say thank you. And don't just go out then and say and do whatever you think.

What you do should be in obedience to God's word. Because if the Lord Jesus has helped you, then your reaction should be, Lord, you've done this for me. Now what do you want me to do? That you listen and hear what he has to say and do accordingly.

And Jesus said do it according to what Moses instructed. There is a direction that you need to follow. I'll stop there.

Now I don't know, do you understand what I've been talking about? Because if you don't see it, you'll fall into that pit. Let us pray. I pray, Lord, that your word will not be in vain.

That we will learn from you. That we'll look and see. That we'll behold and see and grasp what you are showing and saying to us.

That we won't mess things up for you. You were on your way to the city. That was your purpose.

But this man whom you had helped came in between and messed up those plans you had. Because he didn't know about you. And you needed to then stay in deserted places.

You could not even appear publicly. Because things had gone wrong, not because of a heathen, but through someone, because of someone that you had helped. Amen.

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