

Thanksgiving Cannot Be Commanded

by Timothy Tow

True gratitude and thanksgiving cannot be commanded, but must spring spontaneously from the heart, and should be expressed with our lips, knees, hands, and body.

Scripture: Exodus 23:15, Psalm 95:6, Luke 4:24, Luke 7:41, Luke 17:11, Romans 12:1, Colossians 3:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Hebrews 13:15, 1 Peter 2:5

Topics: "Gratitude And Thanks", "Heartfelt Worship"

Description

Timothy Tow preaches on the story of the ten lepers cleansed by Jesus, highlighting the gratitude shown by the Samaritan, a stranger, in contrast to the ingratitude of the nine Jewish lepers. The lesson emphasizes that familiarity can breed contempt, and ingratitude can lead to relapse. The sermon delves into the importance of giving thanks to God with our lips, knees, hands, and our whole body, emphasizing that true thanksgiving must come from a heart that has experienced forgiveness and salvation.

Transcript

In the miracle healing of our Lord Jesus, ten lepers were cleansed at His Word. Nine were Jews and one was a Samaritan. The Jews were of the Chosen Race but the Samaritan was a stranger, an alien and an outcast. Though despised by the Jews he was doubly blessed by the Lord. The last shall be the first. Why? Because while the nine Jews clean forgot their Doctor the moment they were healed, it was the Samaritan who returned to give thanks.

What lessons can we learn from this story?

Familiarity breeds contempt. Jesus being also a Jew, these nine Jewish lepers took him for granted. Jesus said on an earlier occasion, "No prophet is accepted in his own country" (Lk 4:24). A Cantonese proverb is "Local ginger is not hot." A Singapore pastor is lightly esteemed in Singapore .

Jesus did not summon the ungrateful nine to give thanks. He let them go their way. Thanksgiving cannot be commanded. Once there was a father who demanded his nine sons to sign that they would love him in his old age. But love must spring spontaneously from the heart.

On the other hand the nine Jews who were cleansed but forgot their Master might relapse. Ingratitude, says Shakespeare, is like the biting winter's wind. In the warning Jesus gave to the healed 38-year paralytic not to sin any more lest a worse thing come to him, is there no lesson for the ungrateful?

How should we give thanks?

With our lips. The Samaritan glorified God with a loud voice. At a Tuesday night prayer meeting a brother healed of cancer thanked the Lord with deep feelings which moved the whole congregation. This stirred us to praise the Lord together, which added more glory to God. The Lord is well pleased to hear our praises. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Heb 13:15). Often we are heard to speak horizontally, criticising one another. What we need is to speak vertically, praising Him in the highest.

On our knees. The Samaritan "fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks." This is full submission. This is worship. When we come to Church let us worship the Lord in fullest submission, giving our hearts and not only our knees, to him. But there are those who show no reverence by the way they sit in Church and the little attention they give to the sermon.

With our hands. Ex. 23:15 says, "and none shall appear before me empty." Again what we give cannot be commanded. It must come from the heart. It must come from a heart that has experienced the forgiveness of sin. Jesus tells the story of two debtors. One owes \$500 and the other \$50. Both cannot pay back to the creditor. So the creditor forgives them. Jesus asks: Of the two debtors who loves the creditor more? Answer: The one who owes more. How much do you owe the Lord?

One day a lady brought \$2500 to the Church. Not expecting so much from her we wanted to return it to her. But she insisted she knew what she was doing. We concluded it was her love gift to her Lord. She gave much because she was forgiven much. She had passed from death into life. She was grateful for her salvation.

With our body. And that is not a burnt whole offering of a dead animal but "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service." Peter having denied the Lord three times and being forgiven, gave himself now totally to the Lord. He gave himself to be a pastor of the flock. He, like Paul, gave himself a living sacrifice to the end. He also died a martyr's death. From our midst we have seen in Jonathan Lee, a living sacrifice offered for the slum children of Cambodia by living and suffering together with them. He must have been forgiven much. So he loves much. So has his young friend Joon Woo, who, despite the sores erupting all over his body, persists to keep Jonathan Lee company. He suffers for Jesus' sake.

Thanksgiving to God cannot be commanded. It must spring from the heart that makes interaction with our lips, hands, knees, and our whole body. Amen.

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