

Are You the One?

On Sunday, we wrapped up our Thanksgiving sermon series by studying a famous Gospel story where Jesus healed ten lepers.

1. Warm-up Question: How was this Thanksgiving different for you? What insights did you gain from how different this Thanksgiving was?
2. Pastor Vivian began Sunday's sermon by expressing her gratitude to each of her coworkers at church. Giving thanks for our coworkers is not something we often do. Tell us about someone or something you're grateful for in your workplace or, if you're retired, someone or something you're grateful for outside your home and family.
3. Read Luke 17:11-19.
 - a. The Samaritans were the descendants that resulted from the intermarriage of Gentiles and Jews when the Assyrians invaded Israel in the 8th century BC. In Jesus' time, Jews hated the Samaritans because they were considered religiously compromised and unfaithful. Vivian said, "There's nothing like prejudice based on religion." What's a religiously based prejudice that we who attend LifeJourney might fall victim to in our time?
 - b. People with leprosy were considered contagious and therefore feared. As their flesh rotted, they often smelled terrible. They were required to quarantine somewhere outside their village or town. It was a terribly lonely life. In our Gospel passage, the ten lepers appear to have created their own community among themselves. Vivian said, "It was better to be a part of an unpopular, unwelcome group than to be alone." As a kid, or in high school, or thereafter, have you ever been part of a small "leper" community? What did that feel like?
 - c. Have you ever been around someone who was so ill, it was hard to be around them? Describe the experience.
4. Vivian said, "Something that was unique about this healing [of the ten lepers] is that it didn't happen instantaneously. It didn't happen in front of Jesus." Jesus simply told them to go show themselves to the priest in the temple. "And as they went, they were made clean." As Vivian noted, "The healing didn't start until they headed toward the priests; stepping out in faith because Jesus told them to."
 - a. Do you sense God calling you to step out in faith in some way in your life right now? If so, what is it that God might be calling you to? What are the reasons you think God might be calling you in that direction? What causes you to doubt?
 - b. How do we know the difference between God calling and our own imagination?

- c. When people feel God might be calling, they sometimes do what Gideon did, *i.e.*, put out a fleece. Have someone who knows the story about Gideon retell it briefly. Do you think fleecing is a good idea when you sense God might be calling you to do something?
5. When the miracle of healing occurred as the lepers were making their way to the priest, nine of the ten continued on to the temple. Only one of them took the time to return and give thanks to Jesus.
 - a. When was the last time something went so right when you thought it was going wrong that you just had to stop what you were doing and cry out, “Thank you, Jesus!”
 - b. Vivian said, “There is a tremendous difference between simply feeling gratitude and expressing gratitude.” What’s the difference? Why is it so important to express gratitude instead of just feeling it?
 6. Vivian suggested that entitlement is often the enemy of gratitude. When something doesn’t happen the way we believe we were entitled for it to happen, we tend to lose our gratitude and grow resentful. By contrast, Vivian shared the story of a leprosy woman on the Island of Tabango whose face was disfigured, but during worship requested that they sing “Count Your Many Blessings.” Helen Keller once said, “I cried because I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet.”
 - a. Do you think it’s important to find things to be thankful for even when times are hard? If so, why is it so important?
 - b. Vivian also said, “The grounds of our thanksgiving is that God is good; not that God gives good gifts.” What do you think she means? Do you agree?
 7. Vivian described her journey through hardship this year. She went from robust health to being on a walker in 3 weeks – diagnosed with multiple myeloma, followed by the flu, double pneumonia, then chemo, all while being in the midst of the COVID pandemic. In January, to complete her course of treatment, Vivian will face a stem cell transplant that will wipe out her immune system for at least six weeks. Yet, practicing what she preached, Vivian expressed thanks that the stem cells she will receive will be her own (little chance of rejection), that she won’t have to resume chemo, and that, in this age of technology, she will still be able to Facetime with her family throughout.

What’s the hardest thing you’ve ever faced? How did that feel? Where you able to be thankful during that hardship? What are some things you were thankful for during that hardship?

“Give thanks in all things.” I Thessalonians 5:18.