

**“Living Thanksgiving”**

Sunday October 12, 2025

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Pentecost 18

**Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.** Last week’s gospel lesson was all about faith. If you remember the context, the disciples were getting frustrated with the challenges of ministry and they pleaded with Jesus, *Increase our faith!* In my sermon, I talked about how we all have enough faith; what matters is what we do with that faith.

Well, today’s gospel story takes the same question of faith but leads us in a different direction. In today’s gospel, 10 lepers are desperate for care. They ask Jesus for healing and then they do what he says—they go to the priests. The priests confirm that they have been healed, and one leper, the foreigner, the Samaritan, the guy who does not worship the God of Israel, is the only one who came back to thank Jesus. Luke writes...*when he saw that he was healed, [he] turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him.*

The 10<sup>th</sup> leper makes a connection that the others don’t seem to make. The healed man realizes that his faith in Jesus has indeed made him well. When he realizes the depth of this truth, he turns around and praises the God of Israel, who by the way, is not the God he worships. He realizes that Jesus is truly God. He rejoices that God has come into his life and made him well. Jesus is perplexed, however, as to why only one healed man came back to thank him. But he leaves the man with this thought: *[Jesus] said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”*

Friends, can you relate to this story? Can you think of a time when your faith helped to make you well? Now, I’m not asking about “faith healing” or if you have ever experienced a miracle cure. I’m just asking what role faith has had in your wellness. How has your faith changed you? How has your faith helped you to grow or to mature? Has your faith helped you to become more grateful? People often tell me stories of transformation when they tell me about their faith journey. The first thing that folks often share with me is how grateful they are for the difference Jesus has made in their lives.

We had a family friend named Jeff who lived with stage four cancer for several years. It had spread throughout his body, and there was nothing doctors could do to cure the disease. But he was able to take chemotherapy in pill form, and this seemed to keep the cancer at bay for a long time. He continued to live his life with gusto, and he still worked part-time, despite some of the side-effects that the medicine caused.

One thing the experience did give Jeff was a deep sense of gratitude for all that he had. He chose to live his life in a continual state of thanksgiving. He felt that each day was a gift of grace from God and he was very open about his gratitude. He spoke freely about his life and his future when he was with family and friends.

Jeff discovered in this process that practicing gratitude led him to a deeper sense of faith. With a terminal diagnosis, he realized more and more what it means that our lives are in God’s hands. He really learned what it means to trust God. This journey helped Jeff to discover a depth of wellness from God that went beyond the physical healing. He was truly at peace in his heart and in his life. He learned that to have faith means to keep on living and to live a life of faith means always to give thanks.

So friends, this is also our lesson for today. Just as we give thanks to God and praise God during worship every Sunday, all of our lives should be an embodiment of gratitude. Our lives should be a Living Thanksgiving. I don't know if I have shared this with you, but my favorite line from the worship liturgy is this one: "it is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places, give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ." Seriously, that is my favorite part of worship because it names exactly how I feel about my own life. I am so grateful for the life I have been given, for my family and my friends, for you folks, and for the love and dedication that people show to our Lord God. Praising God and thanking God gives me the deepest joy and I can't stop praising and thanking God for coming into my life and calling me to proclaim the gospel message of God's eternal love.

So here's a question that I don't ask too often. How is your knowledge of Biblical Greek? Not too good, you say? But I think you might know the Greek word, *Eucharisto*. Each week we partake of the Eucharist during worship, meaning we share Holy Communion. The Greek word *Eucharisto* actually means "thanksgiving." Not the holiday, but the actual giving of thanks to God. Our participation in the rite of Holy Communion is our version of turning to Jesus and giving thanks for his healing in our lives.

The beautiful part about giving thanks is that it is a choice that we have. We can receive healing and still feel miserable. We can receive healing and still believe that we did it all by ourselves. But when we feel gratitude after being healed, we start to focus on things outside of ourselves. We become more aware of God's presence in our lives. We become aware of how important family and friends are in the recovery process. And any time that we can focus less on ourselves and more on others, we begin to appreciate how richly God has blessed us.

In this season of fall and the harvest, we are reminded to live lives of gratitude. Some churches may hold a special worship service called "Harvest Home" and take the time to give thanks for God's abundance. Some communities gather before the Thanksgiving holiday and hold a community worship service. I know this, because that is what we did three years ago as part of the Hummelstown Ministerium. In fact, Pastor Dave (Schreffler) preached for our Thanksgiving worship that we held, and we collected food and donations for the Food Pantry.

Now, especially, as the days grow darker and the nights grow colder, we have many opportunities to express our own gratitude. Please give generously of your time, talent and treasure to fulfill God's mission. Let us all keep living Thanksgiving each and every day, not just on Sundays. Let us share our abundance and let us remain diligent in our own *Eucharisto*, our giving thanks and praise to God. **Amen.**