



## ENTER God's presence

**Shout for joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious. Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you. All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing the praises of your name.**

– Psalm 66:1-4

Heavenly Father, we give you praise and thanks for all that you have given us and done for us. Help us to always see everything we have to be grateful for as your children. May our time in your word today give us hearts of gratitude for all that you are and all you have done through Jesus Christ, Amen.



## SHARE life together

1. **Share your highs and lows with each other?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **2020 has been a year in which it will be hard for many people to find things to be thankful for. What are you thankful for this year?**
4. **How hard/easy do you find it to adopt an attitude of gratefulness in the midst of difficult times? Share.**

What do you say? "Thank you". Say "Ta! From an early age we teach children gratitude. For it doesn't come naturally. We even teach them to be grateful for the things they don't like, like the Brussel sprouts that have been served up for tea. "Just be grateful you've got food on your plate for there's lots of starving kids around the world who are going to bed tonight without anything to eat." But the more independent we become, the easier it is for the muscle of gratitude to weaken. When you can buy the things you had to ask for, or go to the places that you weren't allowed to go and get the things you want with ease, it's easy to forget how good we actually have it. But gratitude is a gift that puts your present moment in perspective and transforms the way you approach tomorrow. So today we are going to take the time to stop, reflect, and give thanks to God for his abundant blessings to us over the past year. It's His Story, our life - a story for which we are truly thankful.

Week beginning:  
**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2020**

Worship series:

**His Story...Your Life**



**VERSE for the week**  
**One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.**

Luke 17:15-16



**REMEMBER this week**

**Gratitude requires not just feeling thankful but acting on it. Living it. The only authentic response to God's saving grace is faith shown in action, and gratitude that erupts in praise, giving glory to God.**



**LISTEN** attentively

**Read Luke 17:11-19**

- 5. What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?**
- 6. What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?**
- 7. Have you ever taken for granted some of the blessings God has given you? Share.**

A Benedictine monk by the name of Brother David Steindl-Rast once said, “we are not grateful because we are happy, we are happy because we are grateful”. In this healing miracle of Jesus, we see how little happiness actually has to do with gratitude. The nine lepers who did not return to give thanks and praise to Jesus were no less happy about being healed than the one who returned to Jesus but there was an attitude of gratitude in the Samaritan man who returned to give thanks and praise to Jesus which seems to be absent in the other nine.

- 8. What kinds of practices do you think would help foster an attitude of gratitude in your own life?**
- 9. What difference do you think it may have made to his sense of gratitude that this man was a Samaritan, an outsider, not part of the people of Israel?**

It is not clear from Luke’s account of this story how many of these men were Jews, how many Samaritans or how many may have been Gentiles, but what we do know is that by virtue of their disease, they were all outcasts from their communities. This is why Jesus encounters them on the ‘borderlands’. No self respecting Jew or Samaritan was likely to live that close to the other, so it made a viable place for those who had been cast out of their communities for fear of contamination, to have established themselves in the area. Jesus’ act of healing their disease and restoring their bodies, also restored them to their communities, families and friends. Once they were declared ‘clean’ by the priests, they would have been allowed to resume the lives and relationships they’d had before contracting leprosy.

- 10. Sometimes we can forget to recognise the blessing that others can be in our lives. Share a time when God has reached out to you through the actions of a friend or family member. How did you express your thanks?**
- 11. Sometimes we can forget to express our thanks or gratefulness to others, assuming that it is mutually understood. What do you think are some of the advantages of expressing gratitude to others?**



**GROW** deeper

An attitude of gratitude is something we can cultivate for ourselves. It is a matter of having the right perspective. Perhaps we could say that the 9 men who did not return to give thanks, saw how they had been restored to their old life. They once again had access to the friends and family who they had been isolated from for so long. They saw their opportunity to work and contribute to the communities that they had been a part of and so they raced off at the first opportunity to get back into those things. Perhaps the grateful Samaritan saw his healing at a shot at a new life. It is a subtle difference, but a significant one. We can also see ourselves as forgiven children of God and use that status as a platform to confidently march back into our lives and be content with the way things have always been because now we have forgiveness to deal with the bits we get wrong. Alternatively, we can use our new found status as forgiven children of God to start a new life which is full of greater opportunities to encounter and share the grace of God in our own lives and in the lives of others. We can compare what we have now as God’s people with what those around us have and be disappointed at our lack of status, wealth, or possessions; or we can compare what we have now with what we ourselves had before coming to faith in Jesus and be blown away by God’s act of generosity and mercy towards us.

- 12. Compassion is one of the biggest enemies of contentment and gratitude. What areas of your life do you find yourself comparing with others? How has it affected your attitude of gratitude?**

One of the final things for us to highlight in this story is Jesus' words to the grateful Samaritan. He says, "Were not all ten of you cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" While only one man returned to give thanks and praise, Jesus did a miracle for 10 people. It is hard to tell from written scripture whether Jesus was surprised or disappointed by the lack of gratitude and praise from the other nine but either way, it is pretty clear that this is not the response he had hoped for. Sometimes we can be so focussed on our own individual lives that we can fail to see what God is doing through us collectively. It is important to take time together as a church community and to look back and give thanks to God for what he has done for his church. It would be easy for us to look back at 2020 and see only the negatives, yet in the midst of Coronavirus, God has still done amazing things at and through the ministry of LifeWay. As the world moves towards having viable vaccinations for the virus and as we move toward a future with less to fear from the Corona virus we can view our situation as God's people in one of two ways. Whenever it comes, we can look at the end of the virus as an opportunity to go back to what we were or we can give thanks to God for what he has done and continue to journey with him into something new.

**13. What things have you seen happen at LifeWay in 2020 that you think we should be grateful for?**



**LIVE** purposefully

Throughout this sermon and study series, we have heard stories from individuals who have shared with us how God has incorporated their lives into his story of calling, protection, healing, forgiveness, purpose, and presence. God has also drawn their stories into our story as a community of faith at LifeWay. God has also drawn you into the story of LifeWay. Your individual stories, and the way God has entered them, contribute to the witness that we have as God's people to share with and encourage each other, and also to share with our communities, wherever God has placed us.

- 14. How have you been encouraged or blessed by hearing the stories of others as they shared their experiences of living life as part of God's story?**
- 15. What part of your life might contain a story that helps encourage or inspire faith in Jesus for someone else?**
- 16. How might you show gratitude to those who have shared their stories with us through the sermon series or even in your LifeGroup discussions?**



**PRAY** intentionally

- Praise God for his provision, his protection and his blessing on us during 2020.
- Thank Jesus for the healing and freedom from sin and death which have come through him.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a heart and attitude of gratitude for all that you have in Jesus.



**BLESS** one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

**[Name], may your life overflow with gratitude for what Christ has done for you. Amen.**