

Thanksgiving

Next weekend is Thanksgiving weekend. Families and friends all over Canada will gather together for a feast. At many of those meals, someone will ask, "What are you thankful for today?" Many will recite a list of including family, friends, job and the other benefits we enjoy in Canada." However, there are two other questions we must also ask: Who do you thank for all that you enjoy? How do you thank the source of your blessings?" Luke's gospel reminds me what I am thankful for, who I am grateful to, and how I express my thanks.

"And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was not one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well." (Luke 17:12-19)

Our great nation was founded by immigrants. Many immigrated to escape persecution for their beliefs, most notably, their religious beliefs. Like many other people in Kelowna, I can claim that my parents were immigrants to Canada. Like thousands of other new Canadians, they were people of German descent who were born in the Ukraine. They lived under the repressive Stalinist regime. Like the lepers, they were outsiders who were rejected and oppressed by their fellow citizens because of their ethnicity and faith. Many of them prayed to Jesus for deliverance. God used the winds of WW II to move hundreds of thousands of them to Germany. At the end of the war, when resources were scarce, many felt pushed to the edge of society and cried out to God once again for help and healing. Many experienced a call to immigrate to Canada.

They came to Canada full of hope. They learned English, worked incredibly hard, saved and sacrificed in order to achieve the Canadian dream of home ownership and economic success. They had found freedom from political tyranny and the unbearable hardship of war. Many experienced a profound sense of healing. The emotional scars and burdens they brought with them disappeared. Many simply continued on their way to health and wholeness in the new land. My parents, like the tenth leper, in Luke's gospel, turned back to praise, worship and thank Jesus. Weekly worship was a priority for my parents.

I praise and thank God for answering the prayers of my parents and their peers with freedom, healing and material blessing. I thank and praise the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for all the blessings bestowed upon me and my family. Even more importantly, I praise and thank God for Jesus and his amazing grace. Jesus cleansed the lepers, not because they deserved it or as payment of a bargain whereby, they promised to do something in return for their healing. Jesus, the all-knowing Son of God, healed them knowing that 90% would not return to thank him. Jesus' action was a pure act of grace with no expectation of receiving thanks. What made the 10th leper return? It was the God given realization that he had been touched by the hand and grace of God in Christ Jesus. He knew that there was no way to repay Jesus for what he had done. All he could do was bow down

and worship Jesus. The act of bowing down and worshiping, opened up a door to so much more: the promise of faith in and a relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; the forgiveness of sin; a life with Jesus; and in the end, eternal life. Are you like that leper, do you need healing? Can you experience the hand of God in the blessings of your life? Come out and worship with us at Grace Lutheran Church on Thanksgiving Sunday, October 11th, at 9:00AM (with the Praise Band), or 10:30 AM (with the Grace Choir & Special Music), experience healing & wholeness, and watch that door being opened for you.

In Christ,

Pastor Ed Skutshek