

Thanksgiving Day (2017)

Luke 17:11-19

¹¹ Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy^[b] met him. They stood at a distance ¹³ and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

¹⁴ When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed.

¹⁵ One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

¹⁷ Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?”¹⁸ Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?”¹⁹ Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

In the Name of Jesus.

‘Our Lord, Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had GIVEN THANKS, He broke it, etc.’

Actually, no, my dear ones! Our Lord, Jesus Christ did not GIVE anything! Oh, He surely praised God, spoke a psalm at that point—‘You open your hand and satisfy the

desire of every living thing!’—

But our LANGUAGE betrays us! Please don’t think your poor pastor is ‘picking at nits’ here. We SAY the word ‘ThanksGIVING’—when what the Good News of Jesus Christ is all about is RECEIVING!

You see, THAT is our problem! And THAT is the best Gospel of All! That prior to His suffering with sinners, for sinners, Jesus RECEIVED the WHOLE THING as from the Hand of His Dear, Heavenly Father! RECEIVING the cruelty He was about to RECEIVE, as a Gift! And so, we are friends of God for certain!

Our whole problem, my dear ones, is NOT that we don’t know how to GIVE! Our hard old man inside LOVES to give—and make a lot of noise about it! The ten lepers knew what they needed to GIVE, in order to GET what they needed, WRING OUT OF JESUS what THEY knew they needed most at that time. ‘They cried out to Him with a loud voice!’ AND, the title: ‘Master! Expert! Authority! Have pity!’

AND, when it was THEIR TURN TO GIVE—‘Go, follow the LAW—show yourselves to the priests!—oh, they went, all right! Nothing would be more natural for them, or for us!

The wonder is the ONE—who, despite the volume of HIS voice, received from our Lord Jesus and then confessed: If This Man GIVES in this way, then not only are His GIFTS mine—HE is mine, all for ME! He does not—GOD does not!—just give away presents, trinkets, extras. In This Man, God is giving us HIMSELF!

‘Your faith has saved you!’

Again, the Word is speaking of something utterly different from what we men and our religions mean by ‘faith!’ WE mean, our RELIGIONS mean, by faith, OUR orientation toward something, someone; OUR acknowledgement that someone SUPERIOR to us has deigned to lower himself to our level and work with us. SO, WE need to give something, even if just so little, to keep the gravy train flowing!

Explaining why we treat each other the way we do! If WE finally climb off our throne and dispense bits and pieces of goodness—ESPECIALLY to those who have harmed our MAJESTY!—then, by goodness!, they’d better show appreciation of US!

AND, my friends, WE KNOW—don’t we?!—the

PRICE we need to pay others, when WE have wronged them, they have passed it by—and now, we'd better show some gratitude. Happy Thanksgiving, indeed!

Rejoice in the Lord, my dear Christians!

Our Lord Jesus RESCUES us from ALL of that! HE...GIVES...DESPITE our noise! And, yes, He does indeed give His toys and experiments: health, wealth, food, drink, house, home, and so on. But since He has come among us in our flesh, baptized with us, suffered and died as one of us, and has now risen and ascended to rule all things, AS...ONE...OF...US!—

Our Friend, Jesus, gives us HIMSELF; His Father; and the Spirit Who lives in Him without measure, to make His Home with us!

To teach us, AT...EVERY...TURN..., that ALL that comes to us comes to us from the Hand of our dear Heavenly Father.

So that, yes!, we may pray to Him—even LOUDLY, if we MUST!—to take away and sort out our diseases and weaknesses and light and momentary problems. And, according to His good will, He showers on us blessings of

trinkets and stocking-stuffers more than we can count every day!

But, my dear ones, receive THIS!: He gave us, when Christ was born; and He GIVES US...God! The ground and source of who and what we are! So much so, that He is thrilled, BESIDE HIMSELF, when we RECEIVE from Him His gifts—ALL...OF...THEM; SUFFERINGS TOO!—and then we don't move an inch! We STAY, right there, at the God-for-us-point!

Now that is receiving; which we mangle into Thanks-GIVING! And our Lord will even put up with THAT!

One day, Doctor Martin Luther was at dinner, and his dog, named Tolpel, was sitting next to him, waiting for something from Luther's hand, from his table. And Luther remarked at the concentration of his dog, the unblinking attention the mutt directed at his master. And Luther said something about how he had never shown such faithful devotion and expectation toward God as his DOG does toward HIM!

Now, let's not MISUNDERSTAND Dr Luther here! Luther is NOT a proponent of one of our made-up religions! He was NOT saying that the devotion of the DOG should be some sort of GOAL for us Christians!

Christ did not come among us AS...A...DOG! He came as one of US!

What is remarkable, strange, unheard of about the Good News of Jesus Christ, is that without ANY REFERENCE to our orientation toward God, OUR religion, OUR driving the vehicle called 'faith,' Heaven has EMPTIED OUT!

And the angels are our slaves, and all unseen powers are our servants. And the Father has nothing on His agenda today besides OUR good, our salvation. And the Holy Spirit CANNOT BE FOUND...ANYWHERE...ELSE...other than among those poor men, women, children, who need not only God's THINGS, but GOD HIMSELF!

Your FAITH has saved you, my dear Christians! NOT...YOUR...ATTENTION or ORIENTATION toward Jesus! But HIS, toward YOU! He gives Himself! WE RECEIVE Himself!

And God calls Himself well-thanked, in the Name of Jesus! Amen!