

Luke 17:11-19
“Generous Giving”
Thanksgiving Eve

November 27, 2019
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Pastor Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace from God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ –

[Introduction]

I cannot believe it is Thanksgiving. It’s the day to give thanks.

And you know

some of us treat a day of Thanksgiving as an obligation—a duty.

Somehow, we must give God a gift of equal measure –
a worthy thank you.

But there’s the hang up; you can’t.

What could you possibly give that Jesus doesn’t already have?

If — life and forgiveness with God is a transaction,
our sin leaves us dead every time.

BUT man’s ways of gift-giving are not God’s ways:

In the fullness of time God gave His only begotten Son,
to be born of a Virgin,

to be born under the Law to redeem us who are under the Law.

He was given up, betrayed.

He gave his hands to the nails —his head to the thorns — his body to the cross.

Thus he bowed his head and gave up his spirit in order to give you life.

The same body born of Mary,

the body that healed and taught and suffered and died and rose –

is the same body given to his disciples on the night in which he was betrayed.

And He gives you that same body and blood in the holy Eucharist, tonight!

It is the only Thanksgiving Meal in town

you’ll feel better after eating and drinking.

Jesus is the gift.

This is how God gives.

No strings attached. No asterisks or fine print. No Black Friday deals.

Jesus gives unconditionally.

Without any merit or worthiness in you.

It’s not a deal, it’s a gift. Undeserved. Free.

In a word: love.

In a word: hospitality – which means love the stranger.

God loves the world in this manner:

He gives us Jesus.

And Jesus gives himself on the cross, selflessly,
in utter humility for the world, for you.

A gift given. Wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Hung on a cross.

Raised from the dead.

It's a fact whether you believe it or not, want it or not, like it or not.

[*Lepers*]

And that's how Jesus gave to those 10 lepers.

Jesus didn't ask for permission or if they had decided to be healed or not.

He just up and healed all ten out of pure divine goodness
without any merit or worthiness in them at all.

AND WE MUST ADMIT

Giving is risky business.

The high priestly gifts of Jesus often go unappreciated.

Abused. Sadly, even rejected.

Maybe it would be safer and smarter to not give at all then.

No discouragement. No obligation.

But also no love; no hospitality.

Thankfully, Jesus takes the risk.

Takes the chance. Sets no conditions.

Does no pre-healing interviews to see who deserves his grace;
who'll say a proper thank you.

He heals all ten. Then off He goes to Jerusalem, to Good Friday,
to His High Priestly work of dying for them. For you and for me.

And some, even many don't' give a flying . . . Nine to be precise.

Except for that Samaritan.

The most unlikely and unworthy recipient of Jesus' healing
also happens to be the one who understands Jesus' gift most clearly.

He returns thanks. Not out of obligation or to cut a deal.

But in faith. He fell at his feet. With a loud voice and gave thanks.

And that's what faith does:

Faith praises Christ and His gifts.

Faith gives thanks.

Faith looks to the Giver and the gifts and cries out with the lepers,

“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”

[Tonight]

And like the Samaritan we stand before Jesus tonight, as we do every Sunday,
always as beggars with empty hands, unlikely and unworthy recipients.

We receive everything as an undeserved gift from Him.

Giving thanks simply shows that we have heard the gospel
and have actually received God's grace.

That we believe that Jesus risked everything for us and for our salvation.

The more we thank God the Father through Jesus Christ His dear Son,
the more we recognize how generously and bountifully He deals with us.

And how abundant Christ's forgiveness truly is: In Jesus death you are given life.

From his death, he proclaims his verdict over your sin.

His absolution is: “it is finished! I gave my life for every one of your sins.”

From his body broken in death on the cross he gives you His Holy Supper,

His death destroying, sin forgiving,

life sustaining body and blood given you in your own mouth,

His words ringing in your own ears.

“Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven.”

[Conclusion]

SO, now, go and show yourself to your Great High Priest.

For he has shown his sacrificial death before the Father.

He is risen and ascended to the throne.

And you stand in his presence cleansed.

Holy. Forgiven. Healed.

Made well. Saved. And, yes, thankful.

And what do you say to such gifts?

What can you say on any day to give thanks – today or any day?

“Oh, you shouldn't have?”

Of course not! We don't say that!

You simply say, “Thank You! “

So after this service,
 rise and go your way – to your homes and families,
 to the couch, the dinner table, or the shopping mall,
 wherever you go – go your way in the peace of Christ Crucified.

For your faith – and that is Jesus' great gift to you – has made you well. Amen!

As followers of Christ, "Keep loving one another earnestly
And show hospitality to one another without grumbling." AMEN! (1 Pt 4:8-9)
