

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster  
Sunday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Harvest Thanksgiving  
Deuteronomy 8:7-18 Psalm 65 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 Luke 17:11-19

As we think of Thanksgiving and the story today of Jesus healing the 10 lepers and only the Samaritan returns to give thanks. But the message seems to be give thanks to God for what you receive and don't just forget about it and go back to your old life.

But I couldn't help noticing the passage which precedes this one.

*7 'Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from ploughing or tending sheep in the field, "Come here at once and take your place at the table"?<sup>8</sup> Would you not rather say to him, "Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink"?<sup>9</sup> Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded?<sup>10</sup> So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, "We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!"'*

This suggests leaving our egos at the door and being humble, but what about God?

Is the root of our Thanksgiving tradition giving thanks to God so God does not become angry with us?

Ancient harvest festivals were common around the globe in one form or another for millennia. It was believed by some early agrarian societies that cultivated crops contained spirits which caused them to grow. As such, it was seen as vital that the crops were harvested, or the spirits would languish in the plants, and eventually take revenge against the farmers. Harvest and ritual celebrated the release or defeat of these spirits.

Was this thought or fear transferred from the spirits to the one God? Does this mean Thanksgiving is a tradition that has no longer any value to us?

So, do I want to worship a God with a fragile ego who keeps needing to have their ego stroked?

This doesn't have to be. Is this more about what we need than God? I don't believe God will get angry with us if we forget to give God thanks but about our need for realization and humility that all we are and do originates from God. That our worship and thanks to God is for our benefit. If not, we can lose sight of our connection to God and the rest of the community. We need someone bigger than ourselves and it is dangerous for us to see ourselves as the centre of the universe.

There is the sense of paradox. The story of the slaves who should not be thanked and invited to eat with the master for meal. But at in a parable, we have Jesus telling

of the banquet and who accepts the invitation? The irony is the ones who think they don't deserve the invitation are the ones who ultimately accept.

We are complicated, and realizing we are both connected to God as heirs, but also sinful and are not the centre of our own universe.

But also seeing we have the ability to invite others to the banquet. The love we receive from God we can pass on to others.

There is also the reality that a priest and not Jesus could declare any of the ten clean. I heard a comment on this recently, that there is a difference between being cleansed and being healed. Is being cleansed just about the individual and healing about our relationship with God?

The need for God goes beyond the cleansing of the skin. This means going deeper.

The times of transition like being healed of a disease like the 10 today, and thanksgiving is a time to take stock and ask ourselves if the direction our life is heading in is the right one or do we change? Or another way to express it is..... Are we making decisions and choices almost unconsciously, and without deliberate and intentional consideration?

God has given us blessings to for us and for us to share with others. Is God in Christ through the power of the holy spirit asking something of us we have not considered at this time?

And we don't know if any of the other ten when deeper and realized they too were healed as well as cleansed.

Amen

Go now in peace,  
for Christ has called you to live in peace  
among your family in Christ.

Go now in courage,  
for Christ has called you from the places of your life  
to be agents of redemption and partners in healing.

Go now in joy and thanksgiving,  
for Christ is our light!

Go now as one body,  
to love and serve God as you love and serve the world!

*(Elizabeth Dilley, and posted on the United Church of Christ's Worship  
Ways [website](#))*