

The Grateful Samaritan

A sermon by Ted Atkinson, Minister, Oxford Presbyterian Church, Oxford, PA on the nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost, October 15, 1995. Scripture Lessons: Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7; Psalm 66:1-12; 2 Timothy 2:8-15; Luke 17:11-19.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Mark and I were driving home from soccer practice last week. I asked him to help me with my sermon. I keep a Bible in the car so I said, "Mark, open the Bible and read Luke 17:11-19. Read it slowly so I can see what your're reading." He read it to me. "Read it again!" He read it again. He closed the Bible and thought about the story for a few moments. Then he asked, "Do you think the nine healed lepers that didn't come back to thank Jesus got leprosy again?"

It's a good question. Behind the question is a common assumption. "If we're not thankful, God'll get us. If we don't return to Jesus God'll strike us down." You won't find any basis for that idea in the story of the grateful Samaritan. All ten enjoyed healing. One recognized Jesus as the source of healing and returned to thank him.

Apply that to us today. By his death and resurrection Jesus heals and forgives us. The whole world can be divided into two groups: grateful people and ungrateful people. People grateful for the salvation from sin and hell that Jesus gives us; and ungrateful people. The division isn't between sinners and non-sinners. We're all sinners. The difference is between sinners who are grateful for Christ's death and resurrection and those who are unaware or ungrateful.

So what's our response? Will it be gratitude? Corporate worship of the God who comes to us in Jesus is one way we express

gratitude. We don't come to church as an obligation. We don't come to ward off God's curse. We don't even come to get something. We come out of gratitude.

Grateful Christians come every Sunday to worship God who comes to us in Christ. Worship is a priority for grateful Christians. Frail old men and women come to worship with canes and walkers out of gratitude to Christ. Moms and dads come to worship with children because we're so thankful to Jesus for saving us. Young children come because parents make them - but as they grow older, by God's grace, they too will return to give thanks to Christ with all God's people.

So - new members - Be grateful to Christ. He welcomes you into his family. He cleanses you from all sin. Express that gratitude through faithful worship. Become involved in the church's work and worship - in Sunday School or choir or volunteering at the annual Apple Festival or greeting or praying daily for your brothers and sisters in Christ.

And sponsors - be grateful for the responsibility Christ gives you. What a weighty responsibility you have. Walk through the year with these new members. Watch over them. Pray for them. If they're not in worship, call them and see what's wrong. Be faithful, grateful sponsors.

And all members - Be grateful to Jesus Christ. Express that gratitude by returning every Sunday to worship and thank Christ with all his people. Make this hour on Sunday morning a priority.

Let us pray: Almighty God, in our baptism you adopted us for your own. Quicken, we pray, your Spirit within us, that we, being renewed both in body and mind, may worship you in sincerity and truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.