

# Where Are the Nine?

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] For every Bible, I want you to turn to Luke chapter 17. I'm also blessed this morning to see Janet Childs sitting back there. Amen. Amen. Some time ago, Janet had a stroke that the experts say she wouldn't be able to do what she's doing today.

But we serve a greater God, don't we? Amen. He's continuing to work, so you continue to pray for Janet. And I'm sorry to point you out, but no, I don't. No, I'm not. I'm thankful for what God's done in your life.

And continue to do. As so many Americans, Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays. I mean, you know, it's a day of parades and football and turkey and fellowship, and that makes for a great day.

Sadly, however, in the midst of all that good fellowship, sometimes the main thing about it has been missed. More than anything else, it's a day to set aside to thank God for his many blessings.

To remember where we came from. That meaning sometimes has been missed. The forefathers of this country took it seriously.

[ 1 : 0 8 ] American history has somewhat been revisited and revised in recent books. But I'll be clear, our nation was settled by followers of Christ.

Our American heritage is a Christian one, unapologetically. The first American settlement in Plymouth was settled by pilgrims who broke away from the Church of England.

And sailing over on the Mayflower in 1620, they wrote the Mayflower Compact. Before they ever touched American soil, they stated that they wanted a colony based on biblical principles.

That the colony was to be established, and I quote, for the glory and the advancement of the Christian faith. After harvest that first year, Governor William Bradford proclaimed a day of thanksgiving and prayer.

It became a custom that became a holiday under Abraham Lincoln. Over the years, the emphasis has somewhat been mismanaged. But it shouldn't be.

[ 2 : 1 6 ] It's a day to give thanks and praise, and who more should do that than Americans? How blessed we are. The only folks that I can think of would be Christians.

How blessed we are. We have a lot to be thankful for. But are we? An encounter in Luke chapter 17 begs that question.

The account says in Luke 17, verse 11, On the way to Jerusalem, he, speaking of Christ, was passing along between Samaria and Galilee, 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 yourself to the priest. 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. He fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks.

[ 3 : 32 ] Now he was a Samaritan. And then Jesus answered, Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?

Was no 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.

Jesus was en route to Jerusalem, and as he entered into the regions of Samaria and Galilee, he encountered ten lepers. He spoke healing to them and told them to show themselves to the priest.

But only one of them returned back with thanks, and Jesus asked the question, Where are the other nine? Where are the nine? This encounter to me is revealing, and God has been so good to us, we ought to live in response to what God's done for us.

And how should we do that? Well, I believe this encounter gives us three ways that we ought to, that Jesus shows us we ought to give thanks.

[ 4 : 37 ] One is that we ought to speak up and ask God. Speak up and ask God. Now these lepers had heard the rumors of healing that had come from Jesus.

And they wanted healing, and they wondered how they could get it. Scripture says that they stood at a distance from him, They better. They're lepers.

Mosaic law isolated lepers from social contact. They were forbidden to come within six feet of a person. If the wind was blowing, they couldn't come within 50 yards of a person.

And if somebody accidentally approached them, they were to yell, Unclean! Unclean! Unclean! Unclean!

Unclean! Unclean! Unclean! Unclean! So what did they do when Jesus came by? They spoke up. They showed enough fortitude, even in the midst of their circumstances, enough strength under pressure, patient perseverance.

[ 5 : 42 ] Instead of sitting there hopelessly, they got up. Most with leprosy didn't do that.

And no wonder they didn't do that. They suffered from a hideous disease. And a very misunderstood disease, as far as that goes. Because leprosy appears to be slowly eating the body away.

It begins by erasing the facial features. It moves to the fingers and the hands and the feet. And the hands become like frozen claws before they fall off.

The feet become stumps of sores before falling off. The odor is nauseating. The appearance is ghastly. But Dr. Paul Brand was a man who was, at one time, the world's leading leprosy surgeon.

He worked as a missionary with lepers. And he came to the very important discovery that leprosy was a neuropathy that caused people to not feel their extremities.

[ 6 : 59 ] Without pain, they would develop sores from bumps and bruises. And it would not heal. He wrote about that in a book with Philip Yancey.

He wrote several books with Philip Yancey. But this book was called The Gift of Pain. It gave an insight about leprosy that we didn't previously understand. They were outcasts.

They were shut out from the world to live among people of their kind. It would have been easy to give up. But they didn't give up.

They got up instead. Because Jesus was walking by. And I'll tell you today that if you're discouraged and you're going through a hard time in your life and you're struggling, I got news for you.

Jesus is walking by today. He's here for you. Do you feel like you're beside the road? Maybe you feel like life's dealt you a bad hand or the future seems dim or you feel cut off.

[ 8 : 05 ] I got news for you. This is the first day of the rest of your life. And you can look up and ask God for mercy and thank God he'll give it to you. Speak up and ask God.

The second thing I learned from this is to step out and trust God. To step out and trust him. Not only did they come to Jesus and speak up, but they also stepped out.

Understand that after Jesus pronounced healing upon them, they were not healed, Scripture says. It said they healed as they went. They were still lepers when they left him. A leper was not supposed to go to the priest until he was clean, until he was healed.

Yet, once Jesus told them that he would heal them and to go to the priest, God was healing them as they went to the priest.

They had to have the confidence and the faith that that healing would take place before they came to the priest in order to be in proper protocol. It took faith for them to go anyway because they were claiming his healing.

[ 9 : 08 ] That somewhat something wonderfully strange was happening within them. They were healed as they went. They could have easily said to him after he said that, you don't understand, we're not well.

We still feel the ramifications of this. But they didn't. I want you to hear me today. They took God at his word. And if you get up today and ask God for mercy, God will direct you.

And as he directs you, and in the way he directs you, it probably will not be comfortable. God does his greatest work in the uncomfortable times of our life.

But you must go anyway. You must trust him anyway. It's not enough to simply speak up and ask God. You've got to get out and trust God.

We start by asking. We continue by trusting. And when he does his work in our lives, if we've been changed by the Lord, we go back and thank God.

[ 10 : 17 ] All were lepers. All got up. All got up in obedience. And scripture says all were healed. And the similarities stop there.

Most celebrated so much over the work of God that they never bothered to acknowledge God. Now be honest. Not with me, but with yourself and with God.

How many times has God pulled you out, given you new opportunity, and you simply went about your way? But what did this one leper do?

He went back, praised God, threw himself at his feet, and thanked him. And I believe that's where thanksgiving comes into the matter. Because if you're a child of God today, and if you're not, I promise you, you can come to him today.

You have to acknowledge your need for him. Acknowledge the wrong in your life that needs to be cleansed. Acknowledge that he can be your Lord and Savior and cleanse you and save you and change you.

[ 11 : 34 ] And then surrender your life to him today. If that's ever happened to you, you have a responsibility with that. And that's to live a life of gratitude for God.

We need to acknowledge him. We need to acknowledge him. Not one time, but all the time. We need to acknowledge him. How do we do that? Well, we need to acknowledge him with our time. Let me ask you, how much time do you give to the Lord each day?

I mean, if you're thankful for the Lord and his salvation and his leadership in your life, let him lead your life. Give him the time each day to speak through his word.

The ladies shared with you a wonderful concept. With the Bible recap, a wonderful way to go through the Bible together with a group of ladies.

I picked up the commentary that goes along with it. Sound, good, summarizing short stuff. Good stuff. It gives you an understanding. And the podcast goes right along with that.

[ 12 : 43 ] Wonderful. A little bit too high-tuned for me, but hey, I'm not a woman. But the book is wonderful. It really is. Jeff leads men through the Bible through D-Life.

Put someone on a simple reading plan, not trying to accomplish everything and read everything. It's not about the consumption. It's about the digestion.

You do understand that, don't you? We put these bookmarks on these offering boxes and out there for you to have a steady plan. I read that every morning. Matthew 1 through 4 is what I read this morning.

And I was touched by the fact that he went to Peter and Andrew and said, come and follow me. And immediately they followed him. He went to the sons of Zebedee and said, come follow me. And immediately they left their father's business that they were going to inherit and followed him.

And every time I read that, I'm challenged to think when God says to do something, when he speaks to my heart and life louder than words, it's my responsibility to immediately follow him.

[ 13 : 47 ] That's what God tells me today by spending time with him. You have a desire for God's word. You don't have to wait till January 1. You can start today.

But we'd love to guide you in that process. But listen, it's not about winning a badge. It's not about some great accomplishment.

It's about a relationship. It's about taking time each and every part of your day and acknowledging by giving him your time. Are you thankful enough to give him time?

But it's not only time, it's also our talent. Our lives of gratitude acknowledge God with our talents. Are you willing to serve the Lord?

If you are, we'll put you to work. Are you good with babies? How about it when they're a little older than that? We got kid worship now, worshiping underneath us.

[ 14 : 53 ] If you hear the rumblings coming up through the vents, just praise the Lord that we got kids down there worshipping. Are you good at that? Do you know how to smile? Can you show up early?

We have a first impressions team that comes to greet folks as they come in, to give guidance as they need it. Do you want to help us not be interrupted by the mystery for the world?

We got a safety team that does that. We don't put them big ugly thugs out front for the fun of it. We got a meeting coming up a week after Thanksgiving on Thursday night, 7 to 9.

If you just have an interest in knowing more, how to make sure that we can worship without being interrupted by the world. Inviting the world, don't misunderstand me, but not putting up with a bunch of junk.

That's what a safety team's for. Do you have a CDL and you're hiding that from us? We got a bus. Hide no longer. Go to work.

[ 15 : 59 ] Would you be willing to lead kids to know more about the Word? I'm telling you, lives change through the Word of God, and Awana is simply based on the Word of God on Sunday nights.

Great place to serve. Can you handle a middle schooler calmly and effectively? Bless your heart. There's a place for you in glory, but there's also a place for you at Pickens First.

Put your work. Would you like to go and serve in His name? We do missions. In the states and overseas, we do missions.

Do you think you can sing? Or do you look good? Because Brian takes folks that can sing and some that look good. So, some think they're both.

Try to figure all that out when you're watching them next time. Are you willing to encourage a teacher on a regular basis?

[ 17 : 05 ] We have a wonderful outreach called Hearts for School where we're just trying to encourage teachers along the way. And you know there's a sign up in the foyer for that. These shoeboxes we were blessed with with nearly 600 last week.

Put our hands on them and ask God to bless them and for every child that receives one of those boxes. May they not only get a simple Christmas, but may they know the love of Christ. May they commit their lives to Him and may other lives change because those children's lives are changed.

You really want to know what that's about. To get an inside track on that, that processing center that he brought up earlier on December the 1st for us, for the youth on December the 2nd, is a blessing.

We've got some spots reserved. There's some available still. I encourage you to consider taking that day on Friday, December the 1st, and being a part of that for four hours in Charlotte.

It's a blessing. I don't know what's in your wheelhouse. We talked for a few minutes. I might be able to help you with that. But be grateful for what God has done for you and serve the Lord with how He's gifted you.

[ 18 : 26 ] I'll tell you another way to do it is with your treasure. If all that you have is from the Lord, and it is, and if He has called you to be a steward of what He's given you, and He has, and if He's given you clear instruction to bring your tithe into the storehouse, and He has, Malachi chapter 3 verse 10 says, bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and therefore put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down from you a blessing until there is no more need.

What is the storehouse? I'll tell you what it is. It's the place where they stored the grain to be used in the ministry of the temple. It's the place where you're spiritually fed.

The storehouse is where God feeds you. The tithe is literally a Hebrew word that means tenth. It is giving an obedient gift to acknowledge that everything that you have came from God, and God owns all that you have, but you give back in a portion of obedience back to Him.

We are grateful enough, and I've not left my text, to go back and thank God with what He has entrusted us. A life of gratitude says thank you with the time in our life.

Thank you, God, for the gifts and the passions and the pleasures that you've given me. Help me use them for your glory. Thank you, God, for providing for me more than we need.

[ 20 : 30 ] God's been good to us. Give back to Him, and let's let other people be changed by the ministries of the church.

Thanksgiving is an American holiday, but I also think that it's almost even more so a spiritual appointment for Christians.

It's a time to make sure that we come before God and give Him thanks. So many of us can give testimony of how the Lord has blessed, and we need to share that.

You'll have the opportunity tonight before our meal together as people are going to the tables to get their food. I'll ask for testimonies.

We pray about that. What would God have you to share? A short testimony of how God has blessed your life. But the question is, where are the nine?

[ 21 : 34 ] Too many times, people never really acknowledge what God has done for them. And it's my prayer as I prepare this message that may Pickens First Baptist Church be counted as that rare 10% that gives credit to where credit is due.

One out of 10. Let us be the one to make sure that we live lives of gratitude by giving thanks by waking up in the morning with Jesus.

Giving thanks by not celebrating the gifts, but celebrating the giver. Give thanks by being faithful in worship. Give thanks by obeying Him with the tithe. Give thanks by resting in Him for all decisions that we face.

Give thanks by telling someone about the difference that He's made in our lives. Give thanks by circling with friends at a table and with tears say, thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Lord. What are you thankful for today? Footballs, parades, even turkey are enjoyable for a day or for a season.

[ 22 : 47 ] But when the Savior walks down the road of your life willing and ready, that is life and life more abundantly. And there's no better way to say thanks than with all of our lives.

One way to do that is through obedience. And I believe that includes an obedient, based on what Jesus tells us, an obedient participation in the Lord's Supper as believers.

as we gather around the table tonight, before we ever eat, we'll take the Lord's Supper together. Before we do, let's make sure that our lives are giving thanks to God in every way.

Now, I want to be clear today. I don't want you to twist what I said. God can do what God wants to do without us.

God's not begging us to help Him. God will provide every need. And how does He provide it? He provides it through us.

[ 24 : 12 ] And I say what I say this morning because I don't want you to miss out. There's no greater way that you can say thanks to God than to give back to Him.

Your time and your talent and your treasure. And when you don't do that, not only are you robbing God, but you're robbing yourself of the blessing of serving the Lord.

May we live lives of gratitude. With every head bowed and every eye closed, I ask you this morning, if there's ever been a time in your life when you've given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, if that's never happened, I want you to know we're going to stand and sing in just a moment.

And as soon as we do, you can come down this aisle and say, Pastor, I need to give my heart and life to the Lord Jesus today. We'll be happy to guide you in that process. Maybe you're here and you have done that, but you've never publicly acknowledged that.

You've never publicly acknowledged that by baptism. You've never been a part of a church or you feel like God's leading you to be a part of this church. I'm not one to beg and to push and to pull.

[ 25 : 35 ] I just want you to walk in obedience to God, to grow in Him. And so I encourage you to be faithful with whatever God's telling you to do this morning. Maybe you're here and you just need to get some things right and you can do that where you stand.

Just bow your head and close your eyes and pray instead of sing and get it right. Or you can do it around these steps and make it your altar to get things right before God. I don't know how God's speaking to you but I encourage you to let's make the most of this holiday week by allowing us to do it right.

Let's make what's wrong right in our own lives with the power and the hope of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus, I love you and I thank you for the opportunity you give us to be in this place today.

Will you lead us, Lord, in all that we do right now? Help us to simply be obedient and follow your lead. In Jesus' precious name, amen. Stand together.