

Remembering To Give Thanks

Luke 17:11-19

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Remembering -

Why is it **SO** hard to do, so often?

Friday afternoon I was chatting with someone, and needed to pull the name of a friend out of my cranial database. Do you think it could be found?

If my eyes had been a computer screen at that point, they'd have been flashing a blue screen.

NOTHING!

Remembering -

Often reminders are needed in order to remember.

When something important comes up and I'm out on the road, it's not uncommon for me to phone myself and leave a message with the reminder memo. Without them, I'm sure to forget.

And I am not alone.

No - this is not to excuse my leaky brain syndrome.

But I am definitely not alone in being a poor one for remembering.

In the Old Testament Moses gathers the people of Israel together.

Just before they head into the Promised Land, and as he prepares to hand the leadership of the nation over to Joshua, Moses gives a farewell speech. It's a sermon actually. A sermon that we have recorded in the Bible.

We know it as the book of *Deuteronomy*.

Partway through that sermon Moses points ahead to the goal -

7 the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land of flowing streams and pools of water, with springs that gush forth in the valleys and hills.

8 It is a land of wheat and barley, of grapevines, fig trees, pomegranates, olives, and honey.

9 It is a land where food is plentiful and nothing is lacking. It is a land where iron is as common as stone, and copper is abundant in the hills.

10 When you have eaten your fill, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

And then Moses says this -

11 "But that is the time to be careful! Beware that in your plenty you do not forget the LORD your God and disobey his commands, regulations, and laws.

12 For when you have become full and prosperous and have built fine homes to live in,

13 and when your flocks and herds have become very large and your silver and gold have multiplied along with everything else,

14 that is the time to be careful. Do not become proud at that time and forget the LORD your God

In your plenty, surrounded by all your blessings, **don't forget!!**

Don't forget who gave it all to you.

And don't forget the hard times,

the times you did without,

the times of suffering,

the times you thought would never end

- don't forget that in those times

God

didn't

forget

you.

So it is that the very first thing Joshua does when Israel crosses the Jordan River is to set up a monument to God's powerful, gracious care.

"We've got to remember," says Josh.

"And we've got to tell our children."

"We can't forget."

How do you remember?

Well, at least one way is by telling stories.

Again and again through the history of Israel, we encounter them telling the story of their deliverance from Egypt. We see them engage in ritual acts of remembering.

Don't forget the God to whom you owe your life!
Especially when things go well - don't forget.

Ah, if only the lepers had heeded that advice.

Shunned, sentenced to sure and awful death, poor - what a life!

Till they encounter Jesus.

And they are lifted out of their trouble.

Off to the temple they scurry in order to gain the official clearance to re-enter the city, something the priest had to give.

Hurry!

Off like a shot.

Except one.

He praises God.

And he turns around to thank God's instrument of healing - one that we know today is the Son of God. The thankful leper probably didn't know that.

He not only drops to his knees.

He goes right down, face plant right into the dirt.

A clear picture that he was nothing, had nothing, gave nothing...

...and received everything.

He's a Samaritan - a hated, godless foreigner.

Yet he remembers to give thanks!

What of the believers, the Jewish lepers?

Ah, human nature never seems to change, does it?

We tend to take the credit when things go well.

We reserve the blame for God when things turn sour.

Remember to give thanks.

Always.

And remind each other.

Tell the stories of God's care through stormy waters -

The seasons when you thought the illness would never go away.

The times when underemployment left you so frustrated

The very lonely times of grief.

How through them, somehow, God allowed you to keep going.

And moments of unexpected joys -

The amazing new job

The wonder of an intimate relationship

Feeling the depression lift

Waking up free of pain.

Tell each other of those times, brothers and sisters.

And then join together in giving thanks.

That's why services like this one are so important.

Annual reminders of who it is that flows the blessings into our lives.

That's why the video clip earlier.

Counting our many blessings - naming them one by one.

Remind each other -

Also of the little things. You know, the things we've begun to take for granted, or even grumble about at times, forgetting even at all that they really are blessings.

The leper received God's gifts.

He then returns praise to God.

And is told by Jesus, "*Your faith has made you well.*"

The faith that not only receives, but also returns thanks.

That completes the cycle by giving back.

Can we remember to do that?

Giving thanks, for large things.... and for small - yes, let's remember.

Watch these next few slides and see if you can relate, or if they help jog your memory....