

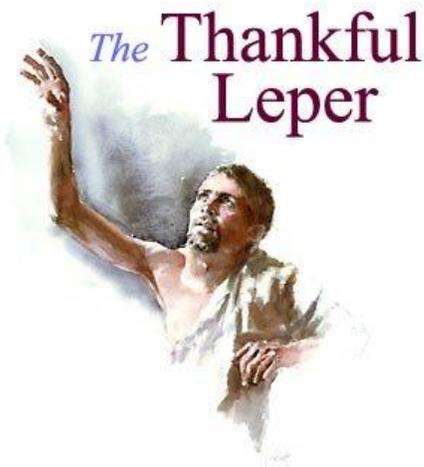
SERMON FOR OCTOBER 13, 2013

The First Chinese Church of Christ in Hawai'i
United Church of Christ
7:45 Worship Service

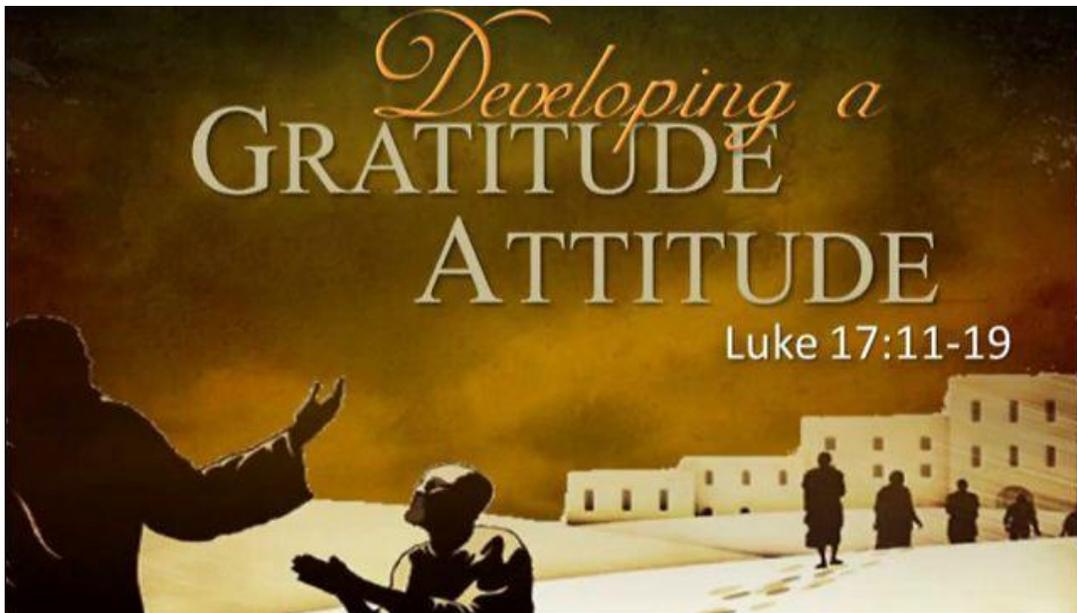
Scripture: Luke 17:11-19 (Focus)

Message: **"GOD'S Faithfulness Extends to All People (even to those who are not Christian)!"**

Kekapa P.K. Lee



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Gathering in the Word

Today we are reminded that GOD is not confined by space or time or by our racial or culture we come from. Sometimes we are the stranger, called to live in a new place to which God has sent us. Sometimes we are the ones called to welcome the stranger. Always we are conscious that the outsider, the stranger, and the foreigner have a special place in the heart of Christianity, because they have a special place in the heart of God.

Hearing the Word

Luke 17:11-19 (The VOICE Bible)

¹¹ Jesus was still pressing toward Jerusalem, taking a road that went along the border between Samaria (*considered undesirable territory*) and Galilee. ¹² On the outskirts of a border town along this road, He was greeted from a distance by a group of 10 people who were under quarantine because of an ugly and disgusting skin disease known as leprosy.

Lepers (*shouting across the distance*): ¹³ Jesus, Master, show mercy to us!

Jesus: ¹⁴ Go now and present yourselves to the priests *for inspection of your disease*.

They went, and before they reached the priests, their skin disease was healed; *leaving no trace of the disease that scarred them and separated them from the community*.

¹⁵ One of them, the instant he realized he had been healed, turned and ran back to Jesus, shouting praises to God. ¹⁶ He prostrated himself facedown at Jesus' feet.

Leper: Thank You! Thank You!

Now this fellow happened to be, *not a Jew*, but a Samaritan.

Jesus: ¹⁷ Didn't all ten receive the same healing this fellow did? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Was the only one who came back to give God praise an outsider? ¹⁹ (to the Samaritan man) Get up, and go your way. Your faith has made you healthy again.

In verse 14 Jesus tells the still-diseased men to go to show themselves to the priest. The lepers were social outcasts as Jewish law demanded they stay outside of the community until they were cured—in which case the first step back to social acceptance was to be examined head-to-toe by a priest. So by telling these lepers to go to the priest, Jesus was holding out the promise of healing.

Picking up on that promise, the lepers *high-tail-it* and made it fast to the Temple only to discover about half way there that indeed—they were healed! So one of the ten wheels around and goes back to Jesus. He falls at Jesus' feet in gratitude and thanksgiving.

Jesus then says in verse 17: "Didn't all ten receive the same healing as this fellow did? Where are the other nine? The only thankful leper was a

Samaritan—the other nine were Jews! Only the loathsome, repugnant, disgusting Samaritan came back to give proper thanks to Jesus!

Lewis Smedes, one of my professors at Fuller Seminary reminds us—that **our lives are out of joint when we fail to give thanks!**

Not giving thanks and expressing gratitude sooner or later hardens us—for it fosters and encourages in us an undue sense of entitlement (*our right, power, prerogative, privilege*). When we keep doing this (not expressing thanks) we feel after a while that we've earned it!

- ✓ We paid our dues!
- ✓ We laid down our cash!
- ✓ We slaved away at our own job to take this dinner out possible—I don't have to say thank you!

To say “thank you” to certain people would admit that maybe what we're getting in life is less an accomplishment and more part and parcel of the large gift of GOD!

A simple word of thanks makes people VISIBLE!

The Westminster Catechismⁱ asks this famous question, “What is the chief goal of human life?” and the answer is—“The glorify GOD and enjoy GOD forever!”

The most important way we do that is by thanking GOD moment by moment for the gifts that GOD generously gives us!

We are to be on the lookout for chances to say little words of thanks to all kinds of people around us as the natural, effervescent overflow of the thanks that constantly bubbles up in our hearts!

Jesus tells the Samaritan who was healed (1 of the 10) of leprosy, "Rise and go; your faith has healed you!" Has **SAVED** you! That's what it literally says in the Greek! All ten lepers were healed—but there's a hint in Jesus' final words that maybe just the one who came back to say "Thank you" was also **saved** in some deeper sense!

Doing the Word

So what is the Word of God for us?

1.ONE: We are a Community of HOPE!

- ✓ We are called to support each other and especially those who suffer!
- ✓ Hope authentically lifts up those who are broken, oppressed, demoralized, exploited and brings healing to the sick!
- ✓ We do some of this already—imagine if we were to do this more intentionally!
 - Training
 - Mentoring
 - Support like Women of Worship!

Story: I recently met Jim Higa, Chairman of Board of Directors for The Grace Moore Kimata Center in Waihiawā. Their Kimata Center sponsors **GriefShare** which is a national organization that has special weekly seminars

and support groups for people who are grieving the death of someone close to them.

GriefShare is a place to be around people who understand what you are feeling. At **GriefShare**, you'll learn valuable information about recovering from your grief and renewing your hope for the future!

2.TWO: We are to live interdependently!

- ✓ We know we can't make it alone, by ourselves—we need a power greater than ourselves alone to receive healing and live faithful lives and relationships!
- ✓ What does this mean?

3.THREE: Jesus reached outside of his ethnic community – so too we need to reach wider!

- ✓ What does this teach us about immigration that in our news every day?
- ✓ Who is in and who is out?
- ✓ Who are the people around you that you don't see?
- ✓ Who are the people around us that we don't see?

Sent in the Word

Once again, Luke provides the most unlikely teacher for us—the Samaritan outsider who had leprosy and was the only of the ten who thanked Jesus for healing him. Sometimes it takes someone else, unexpected, to open our eyes to blessings and wonders in our lives. A person on the margins, on

the outside, may have a better vantage point to look inside and see the heart of the matter.

When has someone else, unexpectedly, helped you to see something important?

Story of the Perfect Mistake

My Mother's father worked as a carpenter. On this particular day, he was building some crates for the clothes his church was sending to orphanages in China. On his way home, he reached into his shirt pocket to find his glasses, but they were gone. When he mentally replayed his earlier actions, he realized what had happened; the glasses had slipped out of his pocket unnoticed and fallen into one of the crates, which he had nailed shut. His brand new glasses were heading for China!

The Great Depression was at its height and Grandpa had six children. He had spent \$20 for those glasses that very morning. He was really upset by the thought of having to buy another pair. "It's not fair," he told God as he drove home in frustration. "I've been very faithful in giving of my time and money to your work, and now this."

Months later, the director of the orphanage was on furlough in the United States. He wanted to visit all the churches that supported him in China, so he came to speak one Sunday at my grandfather's small church in Chicago.

The missionary began by thanking the people for their faithfulness in supporting the orphanage. "But most of

all," he said, "I must thank you for the glasses you sent last year. You see, the Communists had just swept through the orphanage, destroying everything, including my glasses. I was desperate. Even if I had the money, there was simply no way of replacing those glasses. Along with not being able to see well, I experienced headaches every day, so my coworkers and I were much in prayer about this. Then your crates arrived. When my staff removed the covers, they found a pair of glasses wedged between two blankets.

The missionary paused long enough to let his words sink in. Then, still gripped with the wonder of it all, he continued: "Folks, when I tried on the glasses, it was as though they had been custom made just for me! I want to thank you for being a part of that."

The people listened, happy for the miraculous glasses. But the missionary surely must have confused their church with another, they thought. There were no glasses on their list of items to be sent overseas. But sitting quietly in the back, with tears streaming down his face, an ordinary carpenter realized the Master Carpenter had used him in an extraordinary way!

There are times we want to blame God instead of thanking him! Perhaps it is something we ought to try more often, "Thank you, God, for not allowing my car to start this morning." He may have been saving your life from a car accident. "Lord Jesus, thank you for letting me lose my glasses; I'm sure they'll be put to good use or there is a lesson to be learned."

I have to remember this in these times of trial with my own family. May GOD bless your week. Look for the perfect mistakes. God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. - Phil 4:19

ⁱThe ***Westminster Shorter Catechism*** (also known simply as the ***Shorter Catechism***, hereinafter referred to as the **WSC**) is a catechism that was written in the 1640s by English and Scottish divines. The assembly also produced the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Westminster Larger Catechism. The three documents are considered by many Protestants to be the grandest doctrinal statements to come out of the English Reformation. Completed in 1647, it was presented to the Long Parliament on 14 April 1648.