

**Luke 17:11-19**  
**Creekside COB**  
**November 22, 2009**

### **'Wouldn't YOU Like a Flat Head?'**

There was a dad who continually blessed his son from the time he was born. Every time his son would do something good, he would reward his son with something and he would always pat him on the head so that by the time he was 16 he had a flat head.

Well, when you think about it we should all have flat heads. Because we don't have to do anything and our God bestows blessings upon us. He does this because He loves us. And we are to enjoy the blessings.

And for Jim Carrey he makes that part of his daily routine. Jim Carrey enjoys his blessings by counting them everyday.

#### **BRUCE ALMIGHTY MOVIE**

In the movie Bruce Almighty, Jim Carrey plays an ambitious reporter who spends his days doing anything he can to get ahead in his field. One day, he has a one on one meeting with God and his life is turned upside down as he has temporarily been given God's power. Chaos ensues as he uses his power to benefit himself.

During an interview, Carrey reflects on the movie saying, "It's all about not seeing your blessings. . . a problem that is a common thing for a lot of people." Carrey, a man who has a habit of making lists of things he is thankful for says, "He would challenge anybody in their darkest moment to write what they're grateful for. Even stupid little things like the green grass that made them feel good, the friendly conversation they had with someone on an elevator. You start to realize how rich you are"

#### **STUDY**

There was a study published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology a few years back that showed people who count their blessings sleep better, exercise more and care more for others. When the group studied counted their blessings every day they had better mental health and physical health.

College students were asked to maintain a weekly report of five things they were

thankful for. They put things like generosity of friends or the Rolling Stones. Then the study used a group of adults who had incurable diseases to maintain the same list for the things that they were thankful for.

Then the study had comparable groups count the problems they encountered. Some of their answers consisted of being stuck in traffic, burning their dinner or too much week at the end of their paycheck. These people were to focus on the poverty while the others focused on the richness of life.

Well, the study turned out as you might expect. The people in the riches focus group fared much better than the other. Both the group of college students and the group of adults reported better than the other group as they were more willing to help their neighbors and genuinely kinder to more people than they previously had. Both riches groups felt more optimistic about their future than the groups who focused on their poverty.

#### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

In today's scripture passage one of the leper's shows how our souls and spirits are enriched when we count our blessings.

Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem traveling between Galilee and Samaria. Now we know that this place is off limits to the Jews. Jews believed that the Samaritans were lower than low - half breeds is what they thought of them. So the lepers were not just outcasts because of their leprosy but for their nationality.

#### WHAT HAPPENED

"Have mercy on me," they cried. They had to stand away because of their disease. And as they stood back away from the movement of the people of the city, they yelled, "Jesus, Master have mercy on us!"

#### PRIESTS

And as they cry out together, Jesus hears them and does just that- has mercy on them. He says, "Go and tell the priests." Now that seems odd but it isn't, as the act of showing themselves to the priest is customary after Jews were healed. The priests were to proclaim them healed and cleansed so that they could enter into their community.

Now right in the movement of the entire group of ten going to show the priest, they are miraculously healed. Jesus doesn't lay hands on them or pronounce them healed, he just tells them to go and see the priests.

#### SAMARITAN FALLS PROSTRATE

However, one of the ten, the Samaritan, comes back and he falls prostrate on the ground and thanks Jesus. Well, if you don't know what prostrate is, it is flat all out on your belly hands spread wide open . We have to remember that Jesus is traveling, that means this Samaritan was laying himself down into the dirt and dust of the road. He fell prostrate on the ground and worshiped Jesus in the grime of the road.

### WHY WAS IT SO IMPORTANT

What I find so interesting about this passage is the fact that it is a Samaritan who comes back. Jesus was walking the line between Galilee and Samaria so I imagine that the group of lepers were Jewish with the exception of this one leper who they called a Samaritan.

### WHY WAS ALL OF THIS IMPORTANT?

This is the clue to why counting our blessings should become part of our life.

I believe the Samaritan came back because He knew who He was. He cried, "Have mercy on me and feel prostrate because he was a Samaritan and he did not believe that the God of the Jews would have anything to do with him. Because you see if the Jews despised the Samaritans then why would their God ever think of healing them. So, when this man cries "Have mercy," He means have mercy on me who is not one of yours. So, in his healing he is overjoyed. He is someone who didn't believe that he deserved anything or that would ever be blessed by the God of the Jewish people. And He falls prostrate and he enters into authentic worship. An authentic worship, the understanding of who he is and what God has done for him.

I love the Peanuts comic strip where Lucy is chiding Charlie Brown. First frame she says, "I have just examined my character and I find it to be without flaw." Next frame, "What I am going to do is hold a ceremony and give myself a medal." Next frame, "and then I'm going to give a wonderful speech." Next frame, "I am going to receive myself and congratulate myself in the receiving line." In the last frame she says, "You know, when you're a saint you have to do everything for yourself."

That is what Jim Carrey meant. It was the redeeming part of the movie. We think we are doing a lot of it ourselves but it is God giving it all to us.

Some people believe that all their blessings are coming from their own work. I am wondering if that is what the other group thought. I am sure they believed that all their blessings were coming from their obedience to the law. They just went on to obey the law by going to see the priests - never stopping to remember it was about what God did for them not about them.

This is a place that we come into the throne room of God. This is the greatest blessing of all. It is the blessing of knowing God. This 10<sup>th</sup> leper went and worshiped Jesus and in the midst he grew closer to Him. He had a real encounter with the Master. They called Him that, Master. They knew he was the real deal. But only the 10<sup>th</sup> leper prostrated Himself to receive another blessing. The blessing of knowing Jesus in a fuller way.

The 10<sup>th</sup> leper got it. In that one act of gratitude, our 10<sup>th</sup> leper found his life had just got better - not only from the healing of his leprosy but he received a soul healing as well. He was given the gift of faith. He went from not really knowing God to gaining faith. He was healed physically and emotionally. He entered into a life of authentic worship where he understood that it all comes from God. It wasn't about him but about who God is.

The 10<sup>th</sup> leper understood that he needed mercy. He knew that he was about to receive a bounty of blessings. He lay prostrate on the floor because he is having a personal encounter with the Living God, Jesus and that was a treasured blessing. His life has changed drastically. And He said thank you.

When we realize who we are, when we realize that we are all sinners, when we realize that our self-righteousness can never be good enough without it, it is then we cry, "Have mercy on me, for I am just a sinner, I don't deserve any of it. I deserve nothing but yet you continually bless me. You continually pat me on the head. And in the midst of it, we say, "Thank you and count it all."