

October 9, 2016

“Grateful Heart Saves Us”

2 Timothy 2:8-15, **Luke 17:11-19**

It’s a powerful story, isn’t it? I do not want to discredit the nine men, who were so happy that they couldn’t just wait to go home to be with their loved ones, imagining how their families would rejoice.

Maybe this Samaritan was especially grateful because Jesus, the Jewish man, healed him. As you may know, Jews and Samaritans didn’t get along. Jews despised the Samaritans because they were not purely Jewish, they had intermarried with the locals. So this former leper may have been extra grateful that a Jew, who did not like to associate with the Samaritans, healed him.

Whether or not this man’s ethnicity played into his feeling thankful, he was grateful, so grateful, that he didn’t want to leave the site and go on to the new life, which had just opened for him, but turned around to say “Thank you” to Jesus.

Ten men were overjoyed for their healing. This man, the tenth man, felt even happier because of his thankfulness to Jesus.

I think it’s like eating a delicious burger of your choice, whether it is fish burger, meat burger or veggie burger. Let’s say that we are hungry for a good burger. We find a restaurant that serves the type of burger you want. We sit down, place an order and the burger is brought to our table. We take a bite. It’s delicious! Do you make sound when food is delicious—mmmmn or mm, mm, mm, mm, mm? Eating good tasty food makes us happy, doesn’t it?

Then if we can thank God as we continue to enjoy the burger, how would that make us feel?

- thanking God for the health given to us that we can enjoy and appreciate good food
- thanking God for the farmers that worked hard to grow the ingredients in the burger
- thanking God for the monetary resources we have—most of us probably don’t need to worry about the next meal even though we will pay for this one
- thanking God for the good and cheerful service you have received in the restaurant

If we can be thankful for all those things in addition to the tasty delicious burger we are eating, wouldn’t that make us feel even happier, more content and more grateful?

A grateful heart makes us happier, more content, more peaceful and more grounded in the Source of Grace, who gives us all good things.

Then let’s think about this scenario. What if the burger came charred and burned? What if the bun was not of the first quality, but airy without much substance? What if the lettuce on the bun was not fresh? What if the waiter or waitress was not pleasant?

Then, it’s hard to be thankful and happy, isn’t it?

In *Draw the Circle: The 40 day Prayer Challenge*, Mark Batterson, writes about a young couple. John and Tricia Tiller had a three-year-old son, Eli. He was playing by himself in his room when Tricia became concerned because it was too quiet. When she walked into his room, Eli was nowhere to be seen. She saw a table out of place, pushed beneath his second-story bedroom window, and the window screen was missing. Tricia ran to the window, looked down and saw Eli lying thirteen feet below.

Eli was medivaced to the hospital, where he fought for his life in the ICU for three weeks. He miraculously survived, but not without significant brain damage. He has virtually no peripheral vision on his right side, and the left side of his body has very little motor skills or muscle development. Eli speaks with a severe stutter and walks with a pronounced limp.

John and Tricia have thanked God countless times for saving their son, but their prayers for complete healing have gone unanswered. In the aftermath of the accident, John dueled with doubt. He writes.

I began to interrogate God. “Why, God? Why do little boys fall from windows?”

Why did my little boy fall from that window? Why him? Why me? I looked to Scripture for an answer, and it turns out that “Why, God?” is not a new question at all.

Since Eli’s accident, Tricia and I have done everything humanly possible to make our son well. We’ve spent tens of thousands of dollars on uninsured medical equipment. For the first three years after the accident, Tricia and Eli literally spent 80 percent of their waking hours in therapy. We had faith that he would be completely healed. We knew it was going to happen, so we just kept praying and kept waiting. We waited and waited. We knew that one day we’d be standing in front of crowds saying, “Look what the Lord has done! He has completely healed our son.” But that’s not what happened.

After three years of doing everything we could for our son, it was time to accept his current condition and choose to live life with disability So we had to burn our old scripts and look for what God could do with our new script. So for the past five years, we’ve accepted life with disability. That doesn’t mean I’ve stopped praying for my son. Like any father, I’d give my right arm to see my son healed. But instead of getting discouraged or getting angry, I **choose** to look for what God can do.

Mark Batterson writes, “twelve-year-old-Eli Tiller has as sweet as a spirit and as courageous an attitude as anybody I’ve ever met. He recently sang at National Community Church, and there wasn’t a dry eye in the place.”

Three things stood out to me from what Batterson writes after Eli’s story.

1. **We’re so focused on God changing our circumstances that we never allow God to change us!** So instead of ten or twenty years of experience, we have one year of experience repeated ten or twenty times.

Somebody gave this book to me some time ago.

Change Me Prayers: The Hidden Power of Spiritual Surrender by Tosha Silver There is power in spiritual surrendering. From my limited experiences, I’ve learned and experienced that empowerment comes, even a sense of peace and joy comes when we surrender to God, giving away

our control or *our scripts* of how things should go. Surrendering is to trust God for the unknown. Surrendering --giving away our scripts-- allows God to change us, which often leads us to find gratefulness even in trying times.

2. We're often so anxious to get out of difficult, painful, or challenging situations that we fail to grow through them.

“Sometimes we need to pray ‘get me out’ prayers,” says Batterson, “but sometimes we need to pray ‘get me through’ prayers. And we need the discernment to know when to pray what.” From my limited experiences, I’ve learned and experienced that spiritual and personal growth often comes from those trying times.

3. We need to ask God to give us the grace to sustain, the strength to stand firm, and the willpower to keep on keeping on. I guess there is no need to explain this one. We can ask God for the grace, the strength and the will power always and especially in trying times.

And even when we fail – fail to surrender to God, fail to be patient, fail to ask God for what we really need, God is patient with us, God tries to give us what we really need and tries to lead us to such peace that passes all understanding, to such quiet joy that cannot be taken away from us and to such gratitude that runs deep within us.

The Apostle Paul writes in today’s first reading: “If we are disloyal, Christ stays faithful, because he can’t be anything else than what he is.” (2 Timothy 2:13)

Jesus said to the former leper, who came back to him: “Your faith has healed you.”

All the ten lepers were healed, physically healed. All of them followed Jesus’ instruction to go to the priests. All of them got well and were overjoyed...and this one, who turned around to say “Thank you” to Jesus, the Source of healing, I believe, had received greater joy, out of his gratitude. With his grateful heart he received the life that knows the Source of Grace, who offers us the peace and joy even in our trying times.

His thankful heart saved his soul.

May it be so with you and with me. Amen.