**The Lord Giveth; Man Taketh Away**

Based on [Luke 11:1-11](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk11.1-11)

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Thanksgiving Sunday

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It really is amazing to think about how much God gives to us. You know, it's very popular nowadays to put God on trial, and make him answer for the crimes of humanity. "**If we have a loving god, why so much killing and persecution?...Why so much suffering and starvation?**" We accuse God of terrorism because he doesn't stop all terrorism. And because God doesn't show up to our courtroom and sit in the chair of the accused defendant and submit to our interrogations and questions...we assume that he doesn't exist. Or if he does exist he must not care.

And yet, do we ever realize that there is probably enough food to feed the entire world twice over? This Thanksgiving, give thanks to God for such a wonderful creation. **God made the world, and even after it fell into sin and thorns and thistles, there's still more than enough to feed all of it.**  The Lord and Maker of heaven and earth provides all we need to support this body and life. **It's just we, sinful mankind, can't get along well enough to distribute it rightly and share what God has so graciously provided.** God has no crimes to answer for; He is not guilty for those who starve. The Lord giveth, and sinful man taketh away and we blame God for it.

And so why is it that the world suffers and starves?...it is because since the Fall, we are by nature sinful and ***unclean***. God made us to be clean and we choose to roll around in filth. God preserves the world, we pollute it. God gives us his pure word, we contaminate it with impurity.

And so we have a story today about ten lepers who were cleansed, **cleansed...**and only one was grateful enough to see God's grace in his cleansing.

These lepers were made clean..."clean", and I want you to consider that word for a moment...and others like it. Clean, Unclean, "dirty", purity, impurity, contagion, pollution, sanitation, contamination. These are words every culture uses to make a very basic distinction, a distinction between **clean** and **unclean**.

At the end of the 19th century scientists discovered that infection was communicated by germs. **And they just couldn't get the message across to people, what the implications of it was...and somebody hit on the brilliant idea of equating germs with what?...unclean.** Germs are "**dirty**"--right?---"**filthy**". And as soon as they made that link: "Germs" and "Dirty", people finally could understand. There's no reasons why germs should be dirty, because we have lots of bacteria that are not contaminating. But that connection, germs and dirty...and they solved everything and people understood.

Adolf Hitler's basic program, Nazism was empowered by a perversion of this distinction. He was just another lunatic until he did what?...began speaking in terms of clean and unclean **races of people**. The Jews were unclean, and so he called for racial purity by enacting a program of ethnic what?..ethnic ***cleansing.*** Environmentalists use words like pollution and sanitation and contamination...well they got that language from religion...not the other way around.

Unclean, "dirty", purity, impurity, contagion; pollution, cleansing; sanitation, contamination... these are really religious terms. And you can see then, what the Gospel writer means when he says of these lepers, **"And as they went, they were cleansed**." Not just that they were healed of their physical leprosy, but they were made ***clean*** by Jesus. They were no longer contaminated; no longer contagious to God's people; no longer a source of pollution in the world; no longer unable to access God's grace.

These lepers had a new standing before their people and before their God, and had every reason to give great Thanks. Because they were **clean**. Anyone who has been a victim of rape, or abuse, or violence, or any other "breach of your person" feels polluted, defiled. It's not just that some bad thing happened to you and then it's over. Even if there's no enduring physical consequences to the crime, you feel ***dirty*** by having been in such close contact with evil.

If you're about to buy a house where a murder or a suicide had taken place, or that was used as a meth lab, to my understanding the real estate agent, by law, has to disclose that fact. Why? **Because there is still, even in our secular society, some very real sense that a person, place or thing becomes in some degree "polluted" or "unclean", by being in contact with evil**. Leprosy was such a pollution, not altogether different than being demon-possessed.

And with that in mind, perhaps you can see the very real grace by which Jesus deals with these lepers. He doesn't avoid them, he hears their cries for mercy, and declares them clean.

And then, ladies and gentlmen, you can see the unthankfulness of the nine lepers who didn't say thank you, because they must have thought they deserved to be cleansed. You can see the arrogance of the nine lepers who obviously thought that, in cleansing them and healing them, God was only doing his duty. And then you can see the great faith of the one leper who, when he was healed turned back (**that's what repentance means...to turn to God**), turned back and praised God in a loud voice, and fell at Jesus feet in Thanksgiving.

And Jesus says, "Was no one else found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner." **Did no one else see that God's cleansing of them was an act of grace, not an act of duty**. Were these other nine lepers, simply like nine-tenths of the world today, **that would condemn God for the sin and suffering and death in the world; rather than thanking him for the times he does take it away?** Was there only one man of ten, who could see that God didn't owe him healing and yet, he healed him anyway...not because of any worthiness of his own, but because of the grace and mercy of a loving God.

The source of all unthankfulness is that Humanity puts God on trial for their own crimes. We summon God to court and say, "**Defend yourself, why do you let us roll around in filth and suffer and die?"** We charge God with negligence, for he has the power to stop all evil and he doesn't do it. We summoned God to court and what did he do...He came.

Ladies and gentlemen, mankind has blamed god for his own sin, suffering and death since the beginning. And two thousand years ago, he went to court to stand accused. He was betrayed and arrested and like a sheep led to the slaughter he did not open his mouth. **God almighty showed up to our courtroom to sit in the defendants chair and submit himself to our interrogations.** Jesus Christ was arrested and accused of plotting terrorism of the temple, and of claiming to be the Son of God. And he refused to give an answer to the charges. Why? Because whatever answers he would give, sinful men would not accept. So instead of giving answers as to why he doesn't stop the worlds suffering...he silently endured the suffering of the world on a crosspiece of wood.

Sometimes there's nothing you can say to satisfy the wicked...you just have to suffer at their hands in order to vindicate your motives. Jesus suffered at our hands, suffered all things, suffered for the uncleanness of the world, and in so doing so made her clean again. And he does so one person at a time, takes each of us, pours water on our heads and cleans us in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...as has happened to little Zylan today.

In ages past it was inconceivable to make the almighty God the defendant in a trial. Now it is commonplace. We live in a day when man has become cavalier enough to outwardly challenge the reign of God and so now it's time to put Job into perspective. In his own sufferings Job said, "**The Lord Giveth and the Lord Taketh Away...Blessed be the name of the Lord**." And that faith made him well. And so, this thanksgiving day 2013, we would do well to remember a play on those very same words of faith...**The Lord Giveth; Man Taketh Away; And the Lord Giveth Again.** Gospel, Law, Gospel. God, Sin, Jesus. **The Lord Created; We Destroyed; The Lord Creates Anew...for you. Blessed be the Name of the Lord.**