

In the ancient world... leprosy... was a long slow death sentence
 Victims were disfigured... Incurable... and contagious...
 And because of it... they were isolated... quarantined
 Without physical... emotional... or financial support
 A long... slow... hopeless... death sentence...

In the reading from Luke's gospel...
 Ten lepers... kept their distance... and begged Jesus... for mercy.

All of them... were healed.
 And went on their way...
 Except for one.
 And outsider. A Samaritan... who turned back to Jesus...
 Fell at his feet... and thanked him...
 And the other nine? Nothing!

We almost expect Jesus to shout out...
Come on now... show some gratitude people!

Gratitude is important...
 It's the driving force behind faithful behavior...

Want to be more faithful? Don't know where to start? ***Try gratitude!***

It's one of the key steps in drug and alcohol recovery programs
 Develop ***an attitude of gratitude***... they say.
 Because when we do... our hearts are changed.
 Selfishness is replaced by selflessness
 Fear abates and joy abounds
 Healing happens.
 But it doesn't come naturally to our sin sick souls.
 It ties nicely to another recovery slogan... ***Fake it till you make it...***
 Because even a feeble attempt at gratitude... is ***something***.

A long time ago... I worked for a tech startup...
 Their motto was... ***Nothing lasts forever!***

Sooner or later...
 The competition would fail... The market would change...
 The product would improve... Customers would buy...
 So don't be discouraged... ***be grateful!***

There's this legend...
 A man lost in the forest for days... stumbled across an old barn...
 A storm was coming... so he slipped inside for cover...
 As his eyes adjusted to the darkness...
 he discovered... he was inside the devil's storehouse... ***of seeds!***
 Seeds sown in people hearts...
 and most of the sacks were filled with ***seeds of discouragement***

Suddenly the door flew open. A devil's helper came to get more seeds
 So he quizzed the devil's helper...

Why the abundance of discouragement seeds?
Because they are so effective and take root so quickly

Do they grow everywhere?

The helper's eyes flashed in anger...
No. They never grow in grateful hearts.

So what kind of herbicide do we need for these horrible seeds?
 So how are we supposed to finding Gratitude...
 In the face of adversity...
 Where do we even begin?

I know some of you approach problems... by making lists...

That's what Robinson Crusoe did... stranded on a deserted island
 He made a list
 On one side, problems
 On the other, blessings

I don't have any clothes

But it's warm and I don't need any

All my provisions are lost

But there's plenty fresh fruit and water

Every *negative...* had a *positive...*

Gratitude Lists can be life changing

Paul and Suzy Bruno work hard at their jobs
 But throughout the week, they write up their blessings.
 Save it to a Gratitude Folder on their computers.
 On Friday's, they print out their lists, and read over Date-Night Dinner
 They've been doing it for decades! With extraordinary results...

So we all get it, right?

Expressions of gratitude... Change our hearts... and heal us

And more than that...

Being merciful... is more rewarding... than receiving mercy

Odd... isn't it?

That giving feels better than getting?

Why ***does*** receiving make us uncomfortable?

Why is it ***so hard*** to accept kind words?

Is it because we don't really believe it? Or deserve it?

Is that why we point to the sky... or shuffle our feet?

We're not wired to accept gratitude easily
Researchers tell us
We have to hear a compliment 10 times before we accept it.

No wonder it's difficult to find ways to say *thanks*

Burrell Dinkins was one of my seminary professors
When a student showered him with praise, he simply said
Thank you for the kind words.
He accepted them. And he was encouraged by them.

In the movie *Remains of the Day*
Anthony Hopkins played a butler to a super-rich family
In researching the role, he spent time with a real butler
Who distilled the essence of a great butler this way
The room seems emptier when he's in it.

Do your work... fill the glasses... clear the plates...
without being noticed... much less thanked

That's the problem with routine ingratitude...
it makes people invisible

Simple thanks and recognition makes people *Relevant.*
Visible. Human. Loved.

And surprisingly...
it always benefits the giver...
more than the receiver...

The first American billionaire was a millionaire at age 23
 He had his billion at age 50
 Every decision, attitude and relationship created power and wealth
 Three years late... he was racked with pain... he lost his hair.
 He was in agony He couldn't sleep or eat or even smile.
 His high-priced doctors said... You'll be dead in a year.

One night... in a dream... he realized all his success would be lost.

The next day he summoned the lawyers, accountants and managers
All my assets are going to hospitals, research and mission work
 The John D. Rockefeller Foundation completely repurposed his fortune
 It funded work on drugs like penicillin
 It funded cures for malaria... tuberculosis... diphtheria...
 And so much more

But the greatest benefit for John D. Rockefeller
 Was NOT dying at 53... He lived to be 98.
 Moving from greed to gratitude made him whole.

It's one thing to be healed – another to be made whole

Jesus said... Were not ten lepers made clean?
 But the other nine, where are they?
 One waited to see if the cure was real.
 One waited to see if it would last.
 One said he would see Jesus later.
 One decided that he had never had leprosy in the first place.
 One said he would have gotten well anyway.
 One gave the glory to the priests.
 One said, "O, well, Jesus didn't really do anything."
 One said, "Any rabbi could have done it."
 One said, "I was already much improved."

But there was that one...

The foreigner... who returned and gave praise to God...

Only one gave thanks.

Then Jesus gave the Samaritan... and ***only*** the Samaritan

Something even greater than healing

Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.

He made him whole.

The least likely of the ten lepers

To receive Jesus' greatest blessing

Got it all.

And it began... With his willingness... To accept God's grace

Accepting God's love... Made it possible... To give ***his*** love

And give him... peace

No longer isolated... No longer untouchable... No longer hated...

Filled with filled with gratitude... Filled with love...

Filled with God...

Maybe we can wind the clock back
 To when we were young
 When we learned to say thank you
 From our parents and grandparents and friends

Maybe even from Mister Rogers

A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood
 Starring Tom Hanks is set for November release
 a timely story of kindness triumphing over cynicism
 based on the true story of a real-life friendship between Fred Rogers
 and a journalist who overcame skepticism
 and learned about empathy, kindness, and decency
 from America's most beloved neighbor.

Here are the lyrics of one of those songs

*Thank you for the little things
 Little things that happen every day
 Thank you for those tiny things
 Tiny things you surely send my way
 Little things for me alone
 To see, to hear, to touch
 Important things I care about so much
 Thank you for the smiles I see
 And the ways I learn from thee each day
 Thank you God for letting me say
 I thank you gratefully
 Thank you for today*

Amen.