

Sermon “Lost in the Everyday”
Kirk of St James
Sunday October 12, 2025
Rev. Amanda Henderson-Bolton

There is something about autumn that almost makes it easier to be thankful. The leaves are brightly coloured, the days are cozy, and we are able to enjoy the harvest—baskets of fruit and vegetables readily available. When things are in abundance, it is easy to let thankfulness roll off our tongues. A week of wet, cold and windy weather will make it more challenging for sure! Thanksgiving is a holiday where we try to take a little more time to recognize the blessings in our lives. I won't say we slow down, because usually it is busier. Thanksgiving weekend we often find ourselves running to the grocery store because we forgot an ingredient, then we are tearing around the kitchen trying to keep things from burning or boiling over while simultaneously setting the table, and yelling at people to come sit down before the food gets cold. By the time we finally sit down to eat we are often hot, cranky, and ready for a nap—or at least I am! It seems an odd way to celebrate being thankful.

Luke is the only one of the gospel writers to include this healing narrative, with thankfulness at its core. Jesus is travelling in the region between Samaria and Galilee which would have caught readers attention. In the ancient world if you were an observant Jew you would not go anywhere near Samaria or Samaritans. “Everything about Samaritans is to be despised—they are considered culturally inferior, and theological and liturgical heretics.” The two groups were not always so bitterly divided though. “Samaria became “foreign” following Israel's succession from the Davidic monarchy...and the establishment of Samaria as the capital of the northern kingdom.” When the kingdom was later destroyed by the Assyrians the people were scattered. In the book of Nehemiah tensions build between the Samaritans living in the land and the Israelites who returned to rebuild Jerusalem. From that time on the two groups

often found themselves on opposite sides of various conflicts. While sometimes it is difficult to comprehend how two people groups once closely related could develop such a deep hatred of one another we do not have to look too far in history to see the same themes repeated. For example, the Sunni-Shia conflicts in Islam, the Catholic and Protestant divide, or sadly as we are all too well aware even political divide.

As if Jesus' current geographical location is not raising enough eyebrows, there is also the matter of the lepers themselves. In the ancient world at least a quarter of the population needed some type of medical care. People were deathly afraid of leprosy and other skin conditions. They did not know what it was, how to treat it, or how it spread. So, people were cast out of the community entirely to the point that you would not even want to cross shadows with someone who had leprosy. They lived away from family and loved ones, with no support or care. Sometimes those who were ill "banded together to become a small company of misery." The only way they could enter back into their former lives and communities is for a priest to declare them clean. There really is no hope for this poor, miserable group of people. Then one day something unexpected happened--a stranger stops to talk to them. The fact that anyone would stop to talk to them would have likely shocked them. Certainly, what happens next feels like it is the crux of the story—they are sent on their way to the priest and as they go, they are healed.

These outsiders are desperate enough, and yet still have enough hope that something might happen that they obeyed Jesus' order. They must have run to the priest when they realized—soon they could return to their former lives! They are given this miraculous chance that nobody had ever been given before. But one of them, realizing what has happened turns back. I would argue what happens next is the true heart of this text. He falls at the feet of Jesus and

says thank you. Jesus' response "get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well" seems to suggest that his thankfulness is where he finds true healing and wholeness.

I have come to believe that even when we do not experience physical healing the way we wish, we can still find inner healing. I believe that is what happens in this man's life. He can see he has been physically healed but, the action of turning back is vital. He goes back to the man who has made this possible and thanks him. That act of thankfulness brings his physical healing and spiritual healing together.

When we thank someone, we recognize what they have done for us. As Christians "the basic Christian response to God is gratitude. Gratitude for the gift of life, gratitude for the world, gratitude for the people who fill our lives." We also feel deep gratitude for God's love shown through the life of Christ and his death and resurrection. Part of the struggle for us as Christians though is that it is easy to become insensible to that reality.

It's no wonder small miracles like hot water from a tap, or a warm place to sleep are easy to overlook—things we quickly became aware of during the challenges after hurricane Fiona. It is easy to miss being thankful for the things that are common in our lives. There is a question that occasionally makes the rounds around Facebook that asks, "If you only had the things today that you thanked God for yesterday what would you have?" Honestly, I think it would have been not getting lost on my way to a wedding and that I remembered to buy the pumpkin pie this year. I don't know about you but, I don't say thank you to God nearly often enough.

We just have to get a stuffy nose to remind us of how precious our health is or, lose our power for a couple days to remind us of how thankful we are for refrigeration, heat, and coffee. Thanksgiving is a time where we consciously try to think of the blessings in our lives, and we see the common a little more clearly. What a tremendous gift. To have the ability to look at our

lives and give thanks for everything big and small. “Writer Anne Lamott says her two favourite prayers are, in the morning, “help me, help me, help me” and at bedtime “thank you, thank your, thank you.” If we wanted to build more thanksgiving into our lives that would likely not be a bad place to start. This Thanksgiving I challenge all of us myself included to think of the things we are thankful for and remember to thank God for them so that each day we build a little more gratitude into our lives. May we have the eyes to see not only the big things but also the common everyday things. And above all may we praise God from whom all blessings flow!