

Are we really celebrating Thanksgiving Day in a year like this? Maybe in past years we had good reason to be thankful. But this is the year of the pandemic! And it is still going strong apparently. There are governors who are basically banning Thanksgiving in their states right now. Maybe we should follow suit. Stop being thankful! until this virus is safely behind us.

If the ten lepers had thought this way, they would have stayed put. They would not have done as Jesus said, going to the priest to be declared clean, until their leprosy was over and done with. Jesus did not heal them where they stood. "*As they went,*" it says, "*they were cleansed.*"

What if they had not gone? Would they have been cleansed anyway? Well, earlier in His ministry, Jesus healed a centurion's servant. He said to him, "*Let it be done for you as you have believed.*" It's a good thing the centurion believed. Good for his servant.

Had the ten lepers stayed put, it would have shown their lack of faith. "What does He mean, 'Go to the priest!' I'm not going until I see the leprosy cleansed in my body. I'll believe Him when I see it. Then I'll go."

Fine. Don't go. And stay a leper. But they did go. All ten acted in faith. And all ten were cleansed as they went. "*Be it done for you as you believe,*" was also true of them. And all ten had a great Thanksgiving Day that year. Yes, all ten were thankful. Only one returned to thank Jesus. But you cannot tell me that the other nine were not thankful. They simply did not return to give praise to God.

So here you are giving praise to God this evening. And your leprosy still is not cleansed. You can still get COVID. It is still a threat to us they say. But you are here anyway. And this shows your faith. Thanking God for His blessings. And some of these blessings we are still waiting to receive.

Anyone can be thankful after receiving great blessings. Only Christians can be thankful before receiving them. Because only Christians can walk by faith. And so the kind of year it is, good or bad, does not determine how thankful we are. You are thankful because God has done great things for you. But also because He promises many more great things to you. Things you do not see, yet believe. Things you will receive as blessings only after your time here is over.

That's walking by faith. It's how the lepers were cleansed. And it's why you are thankful no matter the stress in your life, or how troubling your circumstances.

And yet, you do not always act too thankful, do you? I know this is true because it is true of me. And like you, I am a sinner. And sinners do not walk by faith all that well. Rather, we like to complain how bad things in life are right now. And we can always find someone to blame for everything.

I imagine all ten of the lepers could have placed blame with someone for their leprosy. "Well, he wasn't being careful around me. He got within six feet of me, so he gave me his leprosy!" "Well, I'm not sure how I got leprosy, who I got it from, but if I ever find out...!" They could have said such things. What else do lepers have to do all day? They sure are not going to count all their

blessings and think happy thoughts. They're lepers. They're miserable and they are dying. And the same is true of us. We're sinners, and we are dying because of our sin.

And yet we are called to be thankful. So, dear sinner, "*Be it done for you as you believe.*" Jesus called out to the lepers. He gave them a word of promise and hope. He calls out to you also, and with an even better word. The word of absolution. "I forgive you all your sins," He assures you. "My blood, shed on the cross for you, cleanses you of the disease of your sin. All of you are forgiven."

This is Jesus' word to you just as surely as the word of cleansing was His word to the lepers. But they did not see their cleansing. They had to simply believe it. Do you see your cleansing? No. Like the lepers, you are called to believe it. God calls you to believe that your baptism is a daily cleansing of your sin. He calls you to believe that for Jesus' sake, who died for you, He truly does forgive you.

And as you believe, so it shall be. You believe, not with your eyes, but with your ears as did the lepers. You believe, and so you are thankful. No matter the circumstance. No matter what kind of year it is. You are thankful because what God promises, He does. And by His grace, this you believe. Amen.