

What do you do to help remember things? I have an IPAD that I carry around wherever I go. In that IPAD is an app called “Things”. Each day, I make a list of things that I need to do, and when I am done, I delete them. How about you? Do you have some notepad in your home, in your purse, where you keep a record of things you need to remember to do? I have heard many of you say to me. Pastor, excuse me for a moment, I am having a Senior moment. I just can’t remember what I was going to tell you.” As we get older, the mind isn’t always as sharp as it used to be. It is a good thing to write things down so we don’t forget them. At Thanksgiving time, it is a good idea to make a list. What would you put down on your list that you are thankful for?

I’m sure, my list would include the major things - life, health, family, friends, & the nation we live in, despite all its flaws. But even more than that, I’m thankful for my salvation, our church family, & the mercy that God showers upon us each day. We certainly are a privileged people here in the United States of America.

But has it ever occurred to you that no American was more underprivileged than that small handful from the Mayflower who started the custom of setting aside a day of Thanksgiving to Almighty God. These pilgrims had no homes, apartments & no government agency to help them build homes. They had no gas or electric heat. They had no means of transportation but their legs. Their only food came from the sea & the forest, & the crops the Indians showed them how to plant. No grocery stores or food stamps. They had no money & no place to spend it if they’d had any. They had no amusements except what they made for themselves, no cellphones or tablets, no TV or DVD’s. No pensions, no social security or medicare. They had lousy hospital care. And yet they were thankful.

Here in Florida, we may be a bit frustrated at times with how long we have to wait to get into certain specialists for treatment, or how long we have to wait to have certain medical tests done. We may be a bit sad that we don’t have more interaction with our children or grandchildren. They live sometimes thousands of miles away. We may be a bit miffed that some of our savings is being used up for medical bills. But if you just look around, like the Pilgrims did, we have much to be thankful for. Let’s take a look at the familiar story of the 10 lepers today, and see why we have every reason to give Thanks. Christian: Give Thanks in Turbulent Times!

Talk about turbulent times. How about having an illness that gradually got worse, and you felt miserable for years? That was what leprosy was like in Biblical times. Mosaic Law pronounced a leper as being “unclean”. They were not fit to enter into the tabernacle, or later, the Temple to worship. They could no longer live with their families, but the law required them to live outside the city. The Law required that they rend their clothes as a sign of extreme sorrow, that their faces be covered and that they cry out “unclean” when ever anyone came within 100 steps of them.. Their faces were hidden, representing that no form of intimacy could be known to them.

To be a leper meant no intimacy with anyone, no friendship with anyone, you were isolated and a total outcast. Leprosy was regarded as a disease which the Jews supposed to be inflicted for the punishment of some particular sin, and to be, more than other diseases, a mark of God’s displeasure. If you were a leper, you essentially lost everything, your family, your job, and your money.

The reason I have spent so much time in describing leprosy this morning is because it is a picture of sin and what Satan wishes to do to every single one of you

today. Gradual destruction of the whole human body. Like the leper, we are isolated from true intimacy with God. Like the leper, we too are outcasts from the Kingdom of God. Like the leper, we are in the process of losing everything to sin, and like the leper, we too are being destroyed by that which was in our bodies, the law of sin and death.

We may think that we are sufficient, that we are capable of handling life, but the truth is, we are born helpless into this world, and we are helpless to stand before sin and Satan. We stand condemned by our sins and we are totally helpless. The disease we have has only one cure. The cure comes from a person named Jesus Christ. Jesus healed us from the leprosy of our sins. Yes, by His stripes at Calvary, we are healed. Our sin record has been washed clean. We have forgiveness. Forgiveness is by far the greatest blessing we have received from God. One day a fellow was visiting with his pastor in the parsonage. He picked up a book that was on a stand and began to read. Suddenly he shouted, "Glory! Praise the name of the Lord!" The pastor asked, "What's the matter with you?" The visitor replied, "This book says that in certain places the ocean is 5 miles deep!" "Yes, that's right," said the pastor. "What of it?" The visitor answered, "Why the Bible says that my sins have been cast into the deepest depths of the sea, and if its that deep, I'm not afraid of their coming up again. The pressure of the water is so great there that if the largest battleship could be sunk to that depth, it would be crushed like an egg shell." Take a moment to jot down some of the sins you've committed this past year, sins for which you truly appreciate God's gift of forgiveness in Christ...

In Psalm 103, we are told by King David that the Lord heals all our diseases, not just the leprosy of sin. That's an odd statement, isn't it? How can David say, "He heals all your diseases"? Actually, there are many different ways that God works healing in our lives. How many of us consider ourselves fairly healthy individuals? For many of us the Lord "heals all our diseases" by not even letting us become ill, by giving us the gift of health. Our congregation has around 150 senior citizens. Yet, there are weeks when I am surprised that, as far as I know, there is no one we know in the hospital. How about being thankful today for being pretty healthy the past year?

Let's also not forget the ability that God has given our bodies to heal and recover. Many of you have faced surgeries and life-threatening diseases this past year from which and through which the Lord has graciously healed you. ! It's the Lord who gave the medical professionals the wisdom and the knowledge that allowed your healing to take place. And what about people that don't get better? What about those who have sicknesses— that doctors cannot cure! What about people who have radiation treatments—until they pass away—and miss their last appointment? What about them? I thought Jesus heals all your diseases? Jesus does. Jesus either makes you better—or Jesus makes you perfect! That's why we don't need to be afraid—whatever our earthly doctors tell us! Ultimately earthly physicians fail. Ultimately the doctors in the ER at the Mayo Clinic—the doctors at Johns Hopkins—the doctors at the trauma center at Tampa Bay General will fail. But Jesus never ever fails us. The day will come when Jesus will say it's time to come home to heaven where he will make everything new! Everything—our hearts will never ever attack again. Our brains will never ever bleed. Our minds will never ever be confused again. Jesus will fix our livers and kidneys—our large and small intestines—our joints will have no arthritis—no disks will bulge in our backs. Our heads will never ache—our stomachs will never turn. We will never ever get sick again! The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk. "He heals all our diseases."

Take a moment to jot down a way in which the Lord has healed you this past year, whether it was sparing you from illness, or bringing you through some kind of surgery, sustaining you in your disease, or healing a loved one forever by taking him or her to heaven. Thank you, Lord, for your healing hand in our lives.

Think of the many other promises God has made to you as one of his children. Whatever it is you face in life, you never face it alone. God goes with you wherever you go. When you face set-backs and other trials, God turns it into blessing, somehow or another, whether we see and understand that or not. Think of the confidence God has given you this past year as you have faced whatever it is you've had to face—the good, the bad, and the ugly—knowing that you have a loving and caring heavenly Father. Are you really seeing these blessings?

The Bible says, "And one of them, when he saw that he was healed". The Bible says that he saw he was healed. Now the others no doubt knew that they were healed, but there was something different here. The Greek word is *eido*, and it means to know, see, or perceive. He took the time to note that he had been blessed. He realized that something wonderful had happened to him. He was sensitive to the power of Christ working in his life. His perception had entirely changed.

There is an old Jewish story that illustrates this point. There is a man who goes to the rabbi and complains, "Life is unbearable. There are nine of us living in one room. What can I do?" The rabbi answers, "Take your goat into the room with you." The man is incredulous, but the rabbi insists. "Do as I say and come back in a week." A week later the man comes back looking more distraught than before. "We cannot stand it," he tells the rabbi. "The goat is filthy." The rabbi then tells him, "Go home and let the goat out. And come back in a week." A radiant man returns to the rabbi a week later, exclaiming, "Life is beautiful. We enjoy every minute of it now that there's no goat -- only the nine of us." The situation was the same as at first, but now his perception had changed. He realized that he was blessed to begin with.

Do we really perceive the ways that God has blessed us? Not a one of us is hungry, not a one of us is naked, but most importantly, if you are a Christian, you have been given everything through Christ Jesus. The devil will do his best to keep your mind off the blessings of God. He will try to get you to look at what you do not have. He will try to get you to compare yourself to others. But stop for a moment, and perceive the many things you do have. Peace, Joy, Hope, Forgiveness, Eternal life. A place to live. Heat. Food. Family, Friends. Before you know it, you will realize how blessed you and I are.

When the Samaritan leper saw that he was healed, he turned around. Now the Lord had given the command to go to the priest but he delayed, he turned around and went back to the Lord. Why didn't the Lord rebuke him for this? The reason is because this man realized the priority of gratitude. Technically, we deserve nothing from God, and yet He has blessed us richly. God deserves to be approached first and foremost.

Times may be tough today. But no matter what hardship we may be facing, there is always reason to give thanks! It's time to make a list, to remember all our blessings. Bless the Lord O my soul, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, my soul and forget not all his benefits. Amen.