

Give Thanks

Helen Harray, 13 October 2013 (All-age service)

Luke 17:11-19

Who has ever had a headache? Was it a little headache like this or worse like this or really, really bad like this?

When I was 9 or 10 I went to a farm deep in the heart of the Waikato where some distant cousins lived. One afternoon we went on the back of a down to a river and we fished for eels and cooked our tea and gathered field mushrooms. And these eels were this size and so were the mushrooms. But that night the clouds lowered so they felt like you could touch them.

And they were black and blue, like they had bruises. And the air became tight so you could hardly breathe.

After nightfall in our tent it began to rain. And it was rain such as you don't really understand here in Otago. And it thundered and lightening-ed all night long. And my cousin's father dug trenches all around the tent so we were kept dry.

By the end of the night I had one horsham headache like you wouldn't ever want to have.

And I had to endure this tractor ride home, shifting and lunging on the sheep tracks and hills. It seemed like forever.

When we got back to the farmhouse, I went to bed. It was still early in the morning. And I slept. I must have slept the sleep of the dead because I didn't wake up again until about 7pm that night.

And they were all rather concerned that I was alright.

This particular event really stands out in my memory as you can imagine from my story, but I used to get migraines a lot as a kid. Really bad headaches that forced me to bed with a facecloth over my eyes.

One day when I was about 15, after I had met Jesus and was learning to trust Him, I had a headache and I knelt down at the side of my bed and I began to thank God for headaches. I just genuinely began to thank Him that he understood me and he knew all about me and that he knew what He was doing with my headaches. And I continued to thank Him for some time.

When I got up from kneeling by my bed that day, I don't remember if my headache had gone, but I suspect it had. But chiefly my testimony to you today is that I have never had a migraine since. The occasional headache related to hormones or flu or neck, but no more migraines.

No more migraines ever.

I know this was God's response to my basic attempt to give thanks in all my circumstances.

And it is God's will concerning us that we learn to be a people of praise and thanksgiving.
in everything.

Why? Because

1: It demonstrates a basic belief and trust in God. That he does not allow anything, ANYTHING to happen to us that he cannot make beautiful and good. When we trust God, no power on earth can touch us unless it is God's will. Do you believe this?? And if we will declare God's goodness to us in everything then we can agree with Paul:

2 Cor 12: 9-10 Most gladly I will boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak then I am strong.

I wonder what you don't thank God for?

Can you say with me: **I thank you for the circumstances in which I find myself today**...because you allow

them to make me strong and to increase the power of Christ in my life; you allow them to refine me and teach me and mature me. Every one of them!!

2. It is spiritual principle. It is a spiritual weapon.

A couple of weeks ago Richard talked about spiritual strategies for survival. One of these is the principle of thanksgiving.

Why is gratitude to God crucial to wholeness of mind, body and spirit, to what the New Testament calls “salvation?”

The one leper, the “foreigner,” who returned to thank God, was “made well,” (sozo- “to be healed of spiritual disease and death”)

whereas the nine were merely “cleansed” or “healed” (tharizo- “to be made clean or healed of a disease”).

Physical cure (tharizo), is not the same as “made you well,” or “made you whole” (sozo), a condition often referred to as “salvation.” When Jesus says, “your faith has made you well,” sozo is the verb he uses.

Apparently, to be made well, we must add thanksgiving to our faith.

The person who makes such acknowledgement experiences a salvation that goes beyond the merely physical cure. It is a reorientation of the inner life.

What’s your default setting? Is it praise and trust or is it frustration, anger and negativity?

I will never forget a story told by David Riddell when he was taking a seminar in a building, which opened out onto a busy main road. During a break the room was left unlocked and when David returned he realized that some of his equipment had been stolen. He was intensely angry and burst out of the building blindly looking for the thief and went racing down the road, acting out of his rage that someone would steal this stuff, when he heard God whisper a verse from

James 1: 19

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

So he slowed down and stopped and opened his heart to the Holy Spirit and listened. He then saw exactly – a map of where the thief was and he found the man, with his stuff and demanded that the man hand it over.

What we speak with our mouths is really important. Blessings and cursing come from the same mouth.

You see what is the opposite of thanksgiving so often comes out of our mouths...swearing, angry words, criticism, negativity and everytime I give in to this kind of speaking I contribute to the enemy’s schemes for destruction by spewing toxic waste into the spiritual environment.

When you put yourself down, when you say I am no good, when you curse yourself, let alone others you give the enemy a foothold in your life.

It brings a **cloud** like the one in my story. It’s oppressive, its hard to breathe, its hard to find God and to know joy or faith, it brings a dreadful pall over everything and it blocks the whispers. We just don’t hear them.

But praise and thanksgiving is a weapon of the good side.

2 Cor 10: ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

The opposite of spewing toxic waste into the spiritual landscape is to learn a life of thanksgiving and praise. In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. This will clear the air.

It will bring maturity to our faith and most of all trust.

Praise may be an act of obedience in the first instance, but if you will open your mouth, it will change your spiritual life and then everything else.

I wonder what you will do to express gratitude this week?