Introduction
I have a strong childhood memory of a shopkeeper where my cousin and I used to love to go when on holiday with our grandmother. He had a habit of saying “Thank you” at regular intervals in voice which as children made us giggle! He became known as “Mr. Thank you”.

Perhaps we shouldn’t make fun of him –surely it is better to say thank you too much than to forget to say it at all. This morning we meet 10 men, one who just cannot say thank you enough, and 9 who forget to say it at all. 10 desperate men find the same deliverance and healing, but have 2 very different reactions

Desperate
These 10 desperate men suffer from the dreaded disease of leprosy. They are probably the most despised members of the society of that time, suffering not only from an incurable disease, but also a contagious one. They were totally isolated from family and friends, with no hope of ever seeing them again. Their physical suffering was terrible, and their mental anguish must have been unbearable.

The place where Jesus meets them is on the border of 2 regions whose people hated one another, but the shared misery of their disease has broken the racial barriers down and Jews and Samaritans suffer together.

I expect the rumours about Jesus’ healing miracles had reached their ears, and a glimmer of hope ripples through them. But these lepers knew that there was no way they could see Jesus once he had reached the town and so they stood, desperate to catch him before it was too late.

Among the people we met in Malaysia were groups of migrant workers from Nepal, Burma, Vietnam, the Philippines – desperate men and women estranged from their home countries, their families and friends. They work for 2 years to repay their fare and the agency fees before they even begin to have enough to send a penny home to their needy families. We went to one hostel, eerily reminiscent of the structure of WW2 prison camps, where hundreds of Nepali migrants live. We were taken to the gate where Neil was asked to begin preaching. Soon a crowd began to gather and we were invited in to one of the rooms – or, rather more accurately, cells - where 15 men live in close proximity. About 40 men crowded in to listen to us tell them of the love of Jesus.

Like the 10 lepers, these men are hearing Jesus offer a way of escape from their misery. The lepers, the migrants, turn to Jesus as a last resort. Have you ever been, or are you now in a situation where you feel there is nowhere else to turn? Do you think Jesus will be angry if you come as a last resort? No, he won’t. Although he was undoubtedly tired at the end of a long day’s trek, he still had time to listen to people in need.

If you feel desperate this morning, Jesus is ready to listen.
Deliverance
Jesus gives them something very simple to do in answer to their request – just go and show yourselves to the priest. Can you imagine the discussion that followed? How can we – he hasn’t cured us. Could he not have touched us like he did other people? Could he not have stayed a little longer? Where’s the sign we’ve been cured? Has anybody lost their symptoms? Well, no – so what’s the point?

I wonder who was brave enough to pipe up: “It’s not such a hard thing, Should we not just give it a try? And miracle of miracles, as they obey the simple instruction, they find their symptoms disappear and by the time they reach the priest, they realise they are cured.

What rejoicing there must have been! They must have run off to their family and friends – what a joy to see them again! What a joy to be able to hug one another – remember these men have had no physical contact for years. But, caught up in the rejoicing, 9 of these men have soon forgotten the one who delivered them from the curse of their illness. As CP Hia wrote in Our Daily Bread this morning: “They (the crowds who heard Jesus speak) were happy only as long as Jesus supplied their needs and met their wants. They balked when he asked for commitment”.

Disappointed
Jesus is clearly disappointed and hurt that only 1 out of the 10 took the time to come and say thank you. How do you feel when people forget to thank you for efforts on their behalf, or who simply take it for granted – as their due? Do we thank our partners/parents/children/family generally, or do we take each other for granted.

And if we are so bad at thanking one another, how good are we at thanking God? We come in times of desperate need, praying with desperate intensity, perhaps making bargains with God about what we will do if he answers. We get what we want, the time passes, and we forget.

Even those of us who pray regularly, don’t we often come with a shopping list of wants, and forget to say thank you for answered prayers? It can be a good idea to keep a note of things we ask from God. Then check what has been answered and say thank you before asking for more.

And what of the greatest gift of all that God has given to us -the gift of forgiveness because of Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf? When we first become Christians the thrill and wonder is amazing, but as the old hymn says; Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord?

One of the thrills of ministering in Malaysia is to see the absolute joy and wonder of people caught in terrible bondage to other religions find the freedom of Christ. What vibrant worship! What heartfelt thanksgiving to the one who has set them free!
We have already as a church been challenged by Jesus’ rebuke in Revelation to the church in Ephesus - “you have forsaken your first love” (Rev. 2:4) Let’s resolve not to forget what Jesus has done for us. Let’s not disappoint him, but give him the thanks he is due.

A Debt of Gratitude
But one man did not forget, and the most surprising one at that, for Jesus specifically comments that he was a foreigner. The inference is that the 9 who failed to say thank you were Jews. Luke’s gospel is full of these references to outsiders believing in Jesus, while the Jews who were the chosen, privileged nation, rejected him.

Were the Jews so smug in their age-old religion, taking God for granted, and seeing his blessings simply as their due? Were the prophecies of the promised Messiah so familiar to them that they failed to see them coming true before their very eyes?

We in Britain are a privileged nation. The gospel was preached here in the early first century AD and Christianity has been engrained in our culture. Do we now take God for granted? During 2 world wars, people were conscious of the need to pray and have God on our side. We continue to give thanks to him every year on Remembrance Sunday. But are we still a nation who recognises the hand of God? It is relatively easy to make a choice to be a Christian; we can come to worship without fear of the authorities. Is our worship diluted as a result?

In West Malaysia only 3% of the population are Christians in a predominantly Moslem country. Other religions are tolerated but could at any time be barred. There is a huge debt of profound thankfulness in every Sunday service, for people recognise what Jesus has done for them individually, and also grateful that God keeps the authorities from closing them down.

Like the lone Samaritan, their gratitude draws them to worship in thankfulness to the God who has saved them.

What does thankfulness to Jesus look like? It looks like this man falling at Jesus’ feet in wonder and gratitude for his healing.
It looks like you and me gazing in wonder at Jesus on the Cross, and likewise falling down before Jesus in thankfulness.

All 10 lepers were physically healed, and 9 of them rejoiced because they got what they wanted. Their ingratitude did not mean that the gift of healing was taken away, but they failed to receive something even better - the promise of an everlasting relationship with Jesus through faith. When Jesus says to the Samaritan, “your faith has made you well”, he is offering not only healing from his disease, but healing in his soul.
Conclusion
This morning, are you stuck in a situation that feels completely helpless? Then Jesus is there for you. Just ask. Then just do as he says. It may not quite be the answer you want, but obedience is all he requires.

Have you lost the thrill and wonder of being set free from the past? Are you forgetting to say thank you to Jesus for what he has done for you?

Will you simply take from Jesus, or will you give him the thanks he is owed?

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness” (Col.2:7)