

14/10/07 Giving in Grace Week 2. Luke 17:11-19. 8am

We know we *should* say thank you when people give us things or do things for us. We know we *should* say thank you to God every day for looking after us and giving us such a beautiful world. But we don't always remember and very often we take things and people for granted. Sometimes saying thank you feels like a chore rather than a pleasure – like all the thank you letters we help our children write or maybe write ourselves after Christmas. A long way from St Paul's reminder that 'it is our duty and our joy ant all times and in all places to give you thanks O Lord.'

In today's gospel story 10 very sick people meet Jesus and he makes all of them well. But how many of them say thank you to Jesus? Only one. The other 9 are too just busy or maybe, like a lot of people today, they don't realise all good things come from God. We live in a very materialistic world. There's a big gap between what we actually need and what adverts tell us we need to have. It's easy to lose sight of the fact that we depend on God for everything we have, even for life itself, that we're stewards of all that we have and one day all of us will have to give account to God.

This October is a special month here at St Francis when we're making time to think about all God's blessings to us and how we can thank God in return in giving our time and our money to the Church to help others know God's love. You should all have a leaflet now about Giving in Grace our thanksgiving programme and a prayer card to use at home. In church there are prayer activities in North and Lady chapels and lists to sign up on pillars for new volunteers after services. Individual letters and response forms will be ready for you next week.

Our dialogue makes it clear what Jesus talks most about – it's not prayer or sex but our attitude to money and possessions. As Peter preached last week, giving can be a real blessing not only for those who receive but for also those who give. We can probably all think of at least one special gift we've made or bought for someone we care about, which has given us enormous pleasure to choose and then give to them. Equally there have probably been occasions when we've given a present in haste without thinking what the recipient would really like, or simply forgotten to get them a present at all.

Some people will have already given stewardship a lot of thought, to others it will be relatively new. So please take time to read, reflect, pray and respond to this year's Thanksgiving leaflet. Each person's response will be different, as we all have different demands on our time, talents and money. But we can be sure that whatever time and money we give will make a difference – to ourselves as well as to others.

Jenny Gray October 2007