

## Going Back

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Rick Blackwood: God bless you, through the storm. Through the storm, he is Lord of all. Aren't you thankful for that? Aren't you thankful that we have a building that is standing, all of our campuses? High five your neighbor and say, "I'm thankful to see you here." High five your neighbor. Tell him, "Thankful to see you here." Folks, aren't you thankful our homes aren't decimated?

Audience: Yes.

Rick Blackwood: Aren't you thankful that none of us were killed in Miami-Dade?

Audience: Yes.

Rick Blackwood: You can be seated. ... in this storm? We have so much to be thankful for. Don't we? That's exactly what I want to talk to you about today, but not of my own accord, but rather from the word of God. You know, I think what I have to say at a time like this is, at best, insignificant, but what God has to say to us at a time like this is profoundly significant, so we're going to look to his word. If you have your bible, you can open them to Luke chapter 17. If you don't, you can just look at the screen and follow along that way. I know many of you probably didn't even have time to grab a bible, and that's okay. But I want you to listen to this verse.

Let's stand together, so we read it in honor of God's word. Listen to Luke chapter 17, verse 15. You follow with your eyes as I read it. The bible says, "One of them, when he saw that he was healed ..." Here's the key word today, "... Came back." Everybody say, "Came back."

Audience: Came back.

Rick Blackwood: Everybody say, "Came back."

Audience: Came back.

Rick Blackwood: Yeah. "He came back, praising God in a loud voice." Watch this. "He threw himself at Jesus' feet and ..." did what?"

Audience: Thanked him.

Rick Blackwood: "Thanked him." You can be seated, folks. I love that. Jesus said, "This one man came back ..." Everybody say, "Came back," again.

Audience: Came back.

Rick Blackwood: Yeah. "He came back, and he thanked Jesus." Today, I want to take us back a few

days. Is that okay?

Audience: Yes.

Rick Blackwood: Specifically, I want to take us back to last weekend, to those days when a storm was bearing down on our city, a storm named Hurricane what?

Audience: Irma.

Rick Blackwood: Irma. Anybody remember Irma?

Audience: Yes.

Rick Blackwood: Of course we do. I don't have to tell you that Irma was a deadly storm, packing deadly winds. She was taking dead aim at our houses, at our church, at our families, and even at our lives. Irma was on a projected path, make no mistake about it, to bring catastrophic destruction to everything and everybody in this city. By the way, let me remind you of this. Hurricane Irma was far more powerful than Hurricane Andrew, which did this to this building in 1982. That picture was taken right about here, looking there. This hurricane was more deadly than that.

Folks, I want you to stay with me, because when I saw that projected path, and we all saw it, I knew if Hurricane Irma stayed on that path and hit us that directly, I knew that Miami would be decimated. Folks, it would have been nuclear here, and people, lots of people, would have died. So, I got to tell you, when I saw that storm, when I saw those lines coming up right at us, I remember that morning that I got down on my knees in my quiet time, and I cried out to God.

I said, "God, please, spare us," I was looking at the news, "From that monster. I said, "God, when you were here, you calmed the storms." I said, "God, the winds listen to you. The waves obey your voice." I said, "God, talk to the storm. God, speak to that storm. Speak to the winds. Speak to the waves, and God, please save us from being hit in such a destructive way by this storm." I cried out for mercy to God. I said, "God, if that storm hits us, Christ Fellowship will be set back decades or years in terms of spreading the gospel." I said, "God, there are millions of people in this city who are far from you, and some of them will die in this storm, and they'll be separated from you forever." I said, "God, have pity on them."

How many of you prayed something like that? Can I just see your hands? Yeah. Keep your hands up. Can I tell you something? If you prayed that prayer, can I tell you? God said yes to your prayer. Listen. What I want you to understand is he didn't just say yes to our prayer. He said yes to your prayer. Listen. Listen. Even if you didn't make that prayer, you didn't raise your hand, I understand. Sometimes we get caught up. Even if you didn't pray that prayer, you were blessed by the hand of God, but I'm telling you, folks, without the hand of God stopping that killer ... You saw the picture. We wouldn't even be here today. This building and all of our other buildings would probably be destroyed. Your houses would be destroyed. Your families would be scattered. We'd probably be burying people this weekend.

Don't get me wrong, Key West and the Keys took a direct hit. They're going to be burying dozens of people there. I love the way you're helping them, Christ Fellowship. Amen? I love these people from the disaster center and Red Cross. Some of them are here. Let's give them a hand. You are partnering with them. But, folks, having said that, let me tell you. Had that storm ripped through Dade County, had it ripped through Broward, had it ripped through Palm Beach, we wouldn't be burying dozens of people. We would be burying hundreds of people. So aren't you glad God said yes to your prayers?

Audience: Yes.

Rick Blackwood: Aren't you glad that he blessed us today? We're praying for Key West. We're going to help those Keys, but aren't you glad that he said yes to our prayers? Aren't you glad for that?

Audience: Yeah.

Rick Blackwood: Well, folks, with that in mind, here is my proposition. Listen. When we pray to God and God says yes to our prayers, that demands a response from us back to God. You say, "Well, Rick, how do we respond to God when he so evidently answered our prayer? How do we respond to that kind of blessing?" We're going to find out as we look at this narrative in Luke chapter 17. I'm going to give you three thoughts today. Did we get notes in [inaudible 00:07:44]. Do you have them? Well, what do you know? Thank God for everybody who showed up, volunteered, and got that going. Let's give them a hand. I didn't even know if you had them or not.

On all of our campuses, if you're taking notes, I want to give you a few thoughts, three thoughts on prayer. Here we go. Number one, prayer allows us to call out to God. Prayer allows you to cry out to God. With that in mind, let's pick up the narrative, beginning in verse 11. The bible says, "Now, on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into the village, 10 men who had..." what?

Audience: [inaudible 00:08:32]

Rick Blackwood: Who had what?

Audience: Leprosy.

Rick Blackwood: "... leprosy met him." Now, stop right there and let me give you the lowdown on leprosy. To begin with, back in Jesus' day leprosy was far more decimating than even a hurricane, because you can recover from a hurricane, but in Jesus' day leprosy was considered unrecoverable, because what leprosy appeared to do was to eat a person alive inch by inch, body part by body part. It would just eat your fingers off. It would appear to do that, eat your toes off. It would eat your nose away. It would eat your ears off. It would eat your mouth off. If you had leprosy, you had pus draining from almost every part of your visible body and your

extremities.

If you had leprosy, listen, you were repulsive to people. When people saw you, they would cringe at you. As if that weren't bad enough, people thought ... It wasn't true, but people thought leprosy was highly contagious. In fact, they thought if a leper touched them, they would immediately get leprosy too. Check it out. If you got leprosy, you became immediately an outcast, and you could not ... Listen to this. You could not touch anybody. You could no longer touch your wife. You could no longer kiss your husband. You could no longer hug your children.

You would be sent to a priest. That priest would evaluate you. If he determined you had leprosy, he would order you outside of the city with other lepers, if you could find them, to roam with. Simply put, listen, if you had leprosy, your life was over, because you became devoid of human touch. Even if you could touch somebody, you couldn't feel it, because it destroyed the nerve endings, the physiological nerve endings. Simply put, the result was you were isolated, you were alone, and you were rejected. You could not go home. You could not go to work. You could not even go to church, to the synagogue.

Now, with all of that in mind, these 10 lepers are traveling together. That's the way they did. They had to stay away from people. They were traveling together when all of a sudden they see Christ Jesus. They had heard about his power, so watch what they do. Listen to verse 12. "As he was going into a village, 10 men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a ..." what?

Audience: [inaudible 00:11:42]

Rick Blackwood: "... at a distance." That was protocol. They couldn't go near people. "They stood at a distance, and they called out, literally they cried out in a loud voice, "Jesus, master, have ..." what?

Audience: Pity.

Rick Blackwood: "... pity on us." Stop right there, because that word pity is very explicit. It's a translation of the Greek word [foreign language 00:12:13]. [foreign language 00:12:13] literally means to feel sorry. Let me say that again. [foreign language 00:12:17] means to feel in your bowels, in your gut, it means to feel sorry for somebody. It means to feel compassion on somebody. What these men were yelling at Jesus, they were saying, "Jesus, master, [foreign language 00:12:36]. Have mercy on us. Feel sorry for us. Feel something. Feel compassion on our situation." Folks, here's what I love about our God. Write this down as A and B. God is a compassionate God. Amen?

Audience: Amen.

Rick Blackwood: But that, I mean he has the capacity, listen to this, to feel sorry. He has the capacity to feel compassion. To put it another way, folks, God has a weak spot. I shouldn't say that. God has a tender spot. God has a soft spot in him. Here's what you need

to know. Write this down as B. This is so important. Prayer moves God's compassion. Listen to verse 14. "When he," that is Jesus," When he saw them, when he saw their leprosy, when he saw them crying out, he said, 'Go show yourselves to the priest,' and as they went, they were ..." what?

Audience: [inaudible 00:13:48]

Rick Blackwood: "... cleansed." In other words, when Jesus saw these men crying out to him, listen, it tripped the switch of his eleeó, of his compassion. When they cried out to Jesus, it tripped the switch of Jesus' mercy, and compassion, and tenderness. You see, that's what prayer does. What we need to understand is that's the power of your prayer. When you cry out to God in desperation, you trip the switch of God's eleeó. Everybody say, "eleeó." I want you to remember that word.

Audience: eleeó

Rick Blackwood: Yeah. A little Greek today. The bible was originally written in Greek. Say, "eleeó"

Audience: eleeó

Rick Blackwood: It sound compassionate. Doesn't it? Eleeó. He has eleeó. He has pity on us. Folks, I'm telling you, that's what happened last week. God heard us crying out to him. God heard me. He heard you say, "God, please, spare us from this monster. Spare us from this killer. God, this will destroy this city. Please." God heard our cries, but he had eleeó on this city. He had eleeó on the Christ Fellowship. He had compassion on us.

Now, that raises the question, doesn't it? How do we respond to that kind of mercy? How do we respond back to God when he blesses us like that? Well, here's the answer. Write this down as a big number two. God's blessing calls for expressed thankfulness. Everybody say, "Expressed thankfulness."

Audience: Expressed thankfulness.

Rick Blackwood: Everybody say, "Expressed thankfulness."

Audience: Expressed thankfulness.

Rick Blackwood: Yeah. Watch this, verse 14. "When he saw them, he said, 'Go show yourself to the priest.' As they went, they were ..." what?

Audience: Cleansed.

Rick Blackwood: "... cleansed." Folks, picture it. As they are going into town, something begins to happen to them physiologically. Their sores begin to heal. Their fingers start to grow back. Their ear starts to grow back. Their mouth starts to heal. The pus begins to dry up. All of the sores begin to heal. Folks, can you imagine the joy these 10 men felt, the excitement that they felt? Maybe it was a little bit like the joy we felt

when we saw that storm moving away.

Audience: Yes.

Rick Blackwood: Amen?

Audience: Amen.

Rick Blackwood: Back to the lepers, because don't you know, they jumped up and down? Don't you know, they were high-fiving one another? Listen, we know that's what happened, but listen, I want you to watch what doesn't happen. This is verse 15. What's the first word there?

Audience: One.

Rick Blackwood: What's the first word?

Audience: One.

Rick Blackwood: "One of them, one out of the ten, when he saw that he was healed ..." Here's that key phrase. Did what?

Audience: Came back.

Rick Blackwood: "... came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet ..." and he what?

Audience: Thanked him.

Rick Blackwood: Thanked him. He said, "Jesus, thank you. I want you to know how grateful I am for what you did. You gave back my life. Thank you." But look at verse 17. "Jesus asked, 'Were not all 10 healed? Where are the other ...' " what?"

Audience: Nine.

Rick Blackwood: "... nine?" In other words, only one came back to say, "Thank you, Jesus." Put another way, nine of the ten never went back to say to Jesus, "Thank you." Folks, listen. Jesus doesn't blow that off. He doesn't say, "Ah. That doesn't bother me." He doesn't say, "Oh. That's no big deal that they didn't come back and thank me." No. Jesus pauses, because this was a teachable moment for his disciples. With one of the 10 standing there, Jesus says to the disciples, "Guys, there's something wrong with this picture. There's something wrong with this picture." Let me tell you, when we read this narrative, when we read this story, we tend to think that these nine guys were a bunch of ungrateful men. Right? Amen?

Audience: Amen.

Rick Blackwood: I mean, Jesus had given them back their lives. They were healed. These guys could

go home. They could go kiss their wife. They could go hug their children, and they didn't even go back and say, "Thank you"? We're like, "Wait. What? Did they not feel any gratitude in their hearts at all?" Listen, folks. I think they did. In fact, I think they felt very grateful. I mean, Jesus had given them back their lives. When somebody gives you back your life, you intuitively feel thankful. Don't you?

Audience: Yes.

Rick Blackwood: I think every time they kissed their wife they felt thankful to Jesus. I think every time that they hugged their children, they felt thankful to Jesus. But, you see, the problem was not that they did not feel thankful to Jesus. The problem is they did not express that thankfulness to Jesus. Amen?

Audience: Amen.

Rick Blackwood: They did not say to Jesus, "Thank you, Lord Jesus." They didn't go back and do that. Folks, here's why. This is why I think they didn't go back and do that. Write this down as A and B. This is so important for us to learn. You see, to express thanks we have to do what?

Audience: [inaudible 00:19:56]

Rick Blackwood: We've got to come back. That's why the verse says, "One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back." This guy had to stop going into town, turn around, and go back and say, "Thank you," to Jesus. Here's the problem though. Write this down as B. After God blesses us, we're prone to move in what direction?

Audience: [inaudible 00:20:21]

Rick Blackwood: Forward. By that I mean life is so much about going forward, isn't it, that we intuitively go forward. It's not intuitive to go backwards. Get it. Jesus heals these men from leprosy, and their intuitive response is to go forward, not backwards. They're thinking, "I got to go see my wife. I got to go kiss my wife. I got to go hug my kids. I got to go home and take care of my house. I've got to go back and get my business started. I've lost so much time. I don't have time to go back and thank Jesus." Can't that happen to us?

We pray and ask God to spare us, and he says, "Okay. I'll stop that storm from coming your way," but our intuitive response now is to go forward. Isn't it? Not to go backwards. Our intuitive response is this, "I got to go clean my yard. I got to pick up the debris. I may have to file some insurance papers." Our intuitive response is, "I got to get the kids ready to go back to school. I got to get my business back on track." I'll tell you what my intuitive response was this week. "I got to get Code Blue back on track. Code Blue Revival staff gather around. Come on. We got to get going."

But you see, folks, we can get so intoxicated with forward progress that we don't go back and express our thankfulness to Jesus, that we don't go back and say to

him, "Thank you." Everybody say, "Thank you."

Audience: Thank you.

Rick Blackwood: Thank you.

Audience: Thank you.

Rick Blackwood: For saving us from that storm. You see, here's the problem when we don't express gratitude. Write this down under one and two under B. Unexpressed gratitude is perceived as ingratitude. Everybody, heads up. By that I mean when somebody blesses you in your life and you don't go back and say, "Thank you," to them, you don't express gratitude to them, listen, listen, listen, they perceive that as ingratitude. They may even perceive you as an ungrateful person.

Mind you, you'll be the last one to know it, because you'll think in your mind, "I'm grateful. I'm grateful for what they did. I'm thankful for the blessing they gave to me," but I'm telling you, I'm telling you, if you don't go back and tell them, "Thank you," if you don't express that gratitude to them, they will perceive you as an ungrateful person, and the same is true with God, with this caveat. Write this down as two. Unexpressed gratitude to God is received as ingratitude. Listen again to verse 17. "Jesus asked, 'Were not all 10 cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one ...'" what's that next word?

Audience: Returned.

Rick Blackwood: "... returned?" Everybody says, "Returned."

Audience: Returned.

Rick Blackwood: "...returned to give praise to God, except that foreigner, this foreigner?" Jesus received that as them being ungrateful. Folks, that one guy returned. He went back, and that's what I want us to do right now. I want us to stop. I want us to hit the pause button, and in our hearts I want us to go back to last weekend in our minds and think of what was coming this way. I want us to take a moment right now, where you're seated, to bow your heads. Everyone bow your heads in our congregation at all of our campuses. Bow your head. I want you to take a moment to thank God, to thank him from your heart.

Thank him that your house was not destroyed. Thank him that we have a building to meet in today. Thank him that none of us were killed. Thank him that we're not at a graveyard today. Thank him for stopping that storm from hitting us. Thank him for his [foreign language 00:25:37], his pity, and compassion. God, we pause today to say thank you, thank you, thank you for speaking to that storm and taking it away from us. Thank you that we're here today and we're able to praise you, give you honor and glory. I speak for all of us here. We're not only thankful, but we love you so much. In your name we pray. All of God's people said?

Audience: Amen.

Rick Blackwood: Amen. Now, you might be saying, "Okay, Rick. What do we do now?" Glad you asked. Write this down as number three, and I'm going to close. God now commands us to go forward. Watch what he says to this man, verse 19. "Then he said," he's talking to this one guy who came back to thank him, "Then he said to him, Jesus said, 'Rise and ...'" what?

Audience: Go.

Rick Blackwood: "... go." In other words, folks, there's movement in that. Jesus says to this man, who he had healed, he says, "I have given you back your life. Now, I want you to go into town, and I want you to tell others how I gave you back your life." In Christ Fellowship that's exactly what he commands us to do. He commands us to go now and tell others how he has given us new life. Amen?

Audience: Amen.

Rick Blackwood: And how he has given us eternal life, and how he wants to give them the same. In other words, folks, real thankfulness, listen, real thankfulness does not end here. This will be just the beginning. You see, listen, this is so important. God wants our thankfulness to be more than a moment. God wants to turn our thankfulness now into a movement of God that will send us out of here with hearts filled up with gratitude, that overflow to the world around us and tell people how much God loves them and how much God cares about them. That will change this city. God can leverage this to reach this city for him. In fact, next weekend, what are we kicking off?

Audience: [inaudible 00:28:16]

Rick Blackwood: Code Blue Revival. Code Blue Revival, which we're praying is going to bring a revival in our hearts that's going to overflow to Miami, to the countries where we have campuses, and then the following weekend, not next weekend, but the next weekend, we're going to gather all of our campuses from Dade County. Some will be even joining us from our campuses globally. We're all going to the Wasco Center on the University of Miami, and we're going to have a praise and worship service there, and I want to bring you a message that I pray to God is going to fire you up and send us out of there, and we are going to leverage all of this to bring people to Jesus. You know why? Because he's Lord, and he's Lord of all. That's what we're going to sing about in a moment again.

Now, before we do that, I want us to make a prayer to God again, only this time I want us to pray to him together. You know how we do this. This is a resolution about our thankfulness, what we want to do. You know the routine at all of our campuses? I'm going to read it first. You listen. Then we'll be seated. We'll read it together. Then we're going to stand and read this prayer to God, and we're going to sing He is Lord and Lord of All. Here's the prayer. At all of our campuses, you listen first as I read it. Here it is.

"Oh, god. May I be a thankful person. May I not only feel thankful to you, but may I also express my thankfulness to you every day. Oh, God, let our thankfulness be more than a moment at Christ Fellowship. Let it trigger a movement at Christ Fellowship. Let it trigger a revival in us that will bring the lost to you, Jesus, because Jesus, you are Lord, and Lord of all."

Audience: All.

Rick Blackwood: Everybody say, "Amen."

Audience: Amen.

Rick Blackwood: All right. At all of our campuses let's read this like we mean it, as unto god. Here we go. "Oh, god. May I be a thankful person. May I not only feel thankful to you, but may I also express my thankfulness to you every day. Oh, God, let our thankfulness be more than a moment at Christ Fellowship. Let it trigger a movement at Christ Fellowship. Let it trigger revival in us that will bring the lost to you, Jesus, because Jesus, you are Lord, and Lord of all."

Audience: "Oh, god. May I be a thankful person. May I not only feel thankful to you, but may I also express my thankfulness to you every day. Oh, God, let our thankfulness be more than a moment at Christ Fellowship. Let it trigger a movement at Christ Fellowship. Let it trigger revival in us that will bring the lost to you, Jesus, because Jesus, you are Lord, and Lord of all."

Rick Blackwood: Christ Fellowship, let's all stand, and let's say it one more time. I'm going to ask all of our bands at all of our campuses to come on out, and we're going to sing this song and lift up to him. You ready? Here we go. "Oh, god. May I be a thankful person. May I not only feel thankful to you, but may I also express my thankfulness to you every day. Oh, God, let our thankfulness be more than a moment at Christ Fellowship. Let it trigger a movement at Christ Fellowship. Let it trigger revival in us that will bring the lost to you, Jesus, because Jesus, you are Lord, and Lord of all."

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