



## *Thoughts on the Journey...*

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Before Bingo was about to begin, I saw a woman sitting by herself at one of the tables. She was sorting through the wide variety of Bingo chips in the plastic

container trying to find the ones that matched. When I approached her, I asked if she would mind if I sat with her at her table. She looked up from her chip search, with a friendly smile and said, "No, not at all". I'm not an avid Bingo player, I really don't care if my chips match or not, but Bryden House was the sight I was assigned to on Lumen Christi Day a number of years ago and our volunteer mission was to spend time with the residents doing what they enjoy. I introduced myself and she did the same, then said, "I really don't care if I win a prize, I just enjoy playing the game." She had a gentle demeanor and we laughed about the fact that I wasn't very lucky and didn't expect great outcomes. After the rules of the game were explained, the caller announced the first number, "B-12". We had a total of 4 cards between us and not one B-12! The sound of the churning balls in the Bingo cage stopped and we were hopeful that we would have something to cover on our cards besides the free space. "Nope", she said after the number was called, then she smiled and looked to see that I did not have that number on my cards either. This went on for a couple more calls and finally she was able to use one of her chips that she worked so hard to sort.

It didn't take long before some lucky chap won the first round. As his numbers were being checked and he collected his prize of toilet paper, my Bingo partner proceeded to tell me how lucky she actually was as she rolled her wheelchair out from under the table to show me why. "I was dragged 300 yards by a freight train some time ago. The doctors told me that it was a miracle that I survived." She paused as I reacted in dismay to her news and then she continued, "It's OK. I thank God every day that I'm alive. I may only have one leg, but I can still hold a conversation and I can still read". As I listened to her in amazement, I could see the pool of *peace* in her eyes and marveled at her genuine acceptance of her situation.

As Jesus traveled through Samaria and Galilee on his way to Jerusalem in Luke's gospel this week, he came upon ten lepers who called to him and begged Jesus to have pity on them. Jesus instructed them to go and show themselves to the priests. They left to do as Jesus said and along the way, they were healed. Somewhere along the line, the Samaritan leper realized that he was healed and returned to Jesus rejoicing and

giving thanks. Jesus replied to the man,

**"Ten were cleansed were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God? The he said to him, "Stand up and go; Your faith has saved you."**

Doesn't it make you wonder what happened to the other nine? Were they so caught up in their misfortune that they didn't even realize what Jesus had done for them? Perhaps their healing didn't dawn on them until they were much further down the road and turning back wasn't an option. Maybe after years of being isolated from family and friends the prospect of being reunited with their loved ones was all that was on their minds. Maybe they were angry that they even had leprosy to begin with and felt entitled to their healing. There could be a thousand and one explanations why the other nine didn't give thanks, but there really is not a good excuse. Jesus makes it clear by his response to the leper who returned to him to give thanks, that gratitude is an important dimension our life of faith.

In preparing for this reflection, I couldn't help but think of my Bingo friend at Bryden House those years ago. Her situation was different than the lepers. They were healed; she was not. However, like the leper who understood the importance of giving thanks, her gratitude in faith has saved her. Here is a woman who had a tragic experience that altered her life forever; she lost a leg and still has residual health problems, she had nothing in terms of material wealth or security, but as far as she is concerned, she is blessed. Her wealth of *peace* is rooted in her thankfulness. And so it goes, inner peace is an outcome of inner gratitude. When we give thanks to God for everything in our lives (the good, the bad, the ugly) we develop a gracious acceptance and acknowledge our trust and dependence on God's love and mercy. Being thankful may not heal all of our ills, but faith rooted in gratitude saves us because it changes our attitude and perceptions of our circumstances. God has enriched our lives in countless ways. We can come up with many explanations for not giving thanks, but in the end there really is no excuse. We can also complain and focus on what we don't have. But, in order to be saved from the self-defeating misery of ingratitude, let us rejoice and be glad for all the circumstances in our lives and give praise and gratitude to God daily.