

## Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, October 9, 2022

**Text: Luke 17:11-19**

### **“Thankfulness”**

Oprah Winfrey once said, “Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough.” Neal Maxwell said, “We should certainly count our blessings, but we should also make our blessings count.”

That last quote is about how we respond to the gifts of God, like grace forgiveness, healing, etc., and I think that is what Jesus was getting at in our Gospel for today.

What are you thankful for today? Turn to a neighbor.

In our Gospel, Jesus encounters 10 lepers as he was passing through the region between Samaria and Galilee. Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem and the cross. Keeping their distance (as they should according to Jewish law) they called out to Jesus saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” And Jesus did.

So the first thing I want to highlight is **separation**. At times in our lives we know what it feels like to be separated from our loved ones... sometimes by choice... and other times through circumstances out of our control like weather events or wars. Lepers were required to leave their homes, families, and communities because of their physical condition known as leprosy. It was a horribly contagious skin and nerve disease that made their skin white and flakey. Lepers had to live in small colonies outside the city gates.

Jesus responded to their cries by saying, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” Showing yourself to the priest was part of Jewish law. The priest had to declare you clean before you could re-enter your communities. And as they went, they were made clean. So obeying Jesus' command to “go” brought physical healing to the Lepers. All 10 were physically healed.

But only one turned back to praise God and give thanks to Jesus. Can you blame the 9 for wanting to get through the red tape with the priest so they could go back home? The Samaritan, a foreigner, who was

used to being on the margins returned to thank Jesus. How true is that when people who have very little teach us how to be thankful.

His turning back reminds me of the times I have served meals at soup kitchens or at a community Thanksgiving dinner. Those who were able to say thank you and look you in the eye blessed us.

According to Jesus the Samaritan responded correctly. He asked where are the other nine? Jesus told him to “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

Your faith has made you well. The healing is revealed when the leper who returned rightly identified Jesus- not the temple and priests—as the source of restoration.

The grace the Lepers received is the same grace we receive in church.

For example we return to Christ at the communion table, where earthly labels are rendered insignificant and all are welcomed simply as children of God. In our Baptismal liturgy, we are offered cleansing from sin, death and the devil, new clothes, and are welcomed into community.

The healing of the Leper is more than skin deep. He was physically healed and received a new self-image, restoration to community, and shift from isolation.

This wellness is accessible to all who see, turn, and respond in praise.

## **Gratitude**

The text invites us to follow the healed leper into a life of thanksgiving and praise of God. We can return to Jesus over and over again and he will respond with grace.

Christ’s healing evokes nothing other than thanksgiving and praise.

Get up and go, your faith has made you well.