

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity  
5 September, Anno Domini 2021  
St. Luke 17:11-19  
The Rev'd. Kurt A. Ulmer

In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It is really a pleasure to be with people during times of great joy or hear them tell about times in the past when they can look back and see how richly God has blessed them even in the darkest hours. It is good that we stop and give thanks to God for all His benefits, all the times that He has delivered us from hardship and maybe even death. At the very least, it's the polite thing to do. Our parents always made us write thank you cards when we received gifts. And we all try to teach our children early on the importance of saying please and thank you.

So we can certainly understand that Jesus would be a little annoyed that nine of the ten men He healed just kept on walking to the priest after they realized that their flesh, once ashen, gray, and covered in open sores, was suddenly restored, like the skin of child. And their healing meant much more than just the end of being so grotesque and deathly sick. They had been outcasts, marked as unclean, separated from the rest of society and their families. They could actually go to the temple again. They could go to the store. They could have a job. Their leprosy had meant that they were as good as dead. They were left to wander the streets, begging, warning people that they were around in order to be avoided. With no fan fare or magic potions, Jesus changed all that in an instant. And only one, a foreigner, doubly cursed in the eyes of the Jews because of His lineage and religious affiliation, turned around to say thank you.

It is striking how rude those men were. I would guess you probably felt quite disgusted as you listened to today's Gospel. You should be - with yourself. We are no better than the nine. Sure, at times we remember to give thanks to God. We bow our heads before at least one of our meals during the day, if we think of it. But even though we may not have much in the way of wealth, our homes may be just big enough for us to turn around in, we have to get whatever's on sale - whether we have a lot or a little, we are blessed. And yet, we have all complained and grumbled about how we should have a right to more or how life just isn't fair.

Repent. We don't deserve anything good, especially from God. We are ingrates, quicker to notice what is lacking than the abundance that has been laid in our laps free of charge. We have earned nothing but we want to credit our hard work, discipline, and effort. We think we should be rewarded. But everything we have - every last penny, every drink of coffee, every gallon of gas, every pillow on our bed is a gift from our gracious and merciful heavenly Father. And it goes without saying, we have, on more than one occasion, just kept on going on our merry way without so much as a thank you.

But that doesn't stop Jesus. He healed those nine men knowing full well that they would never give Him a second thought. He loved them and He loves you. He is merciful, never counting the cost or wanting anything in return. His love for you isn't dependent on your love for Him. He wants you to have what you need. He wants you to be taken care of. He healed them and He will care for you, whether you say thank you or not.

But there's way more for you to be thankful for than a warm bed and full belly. You see the same thing that the one healed man was blessed to see. You see that Jesus is the true source of all blessing. You know that because He left that town and finished His trip to Jerusalem, you have been set free from an illness far worse than any leprosy, cancer, or COVID. Like the Samaritan, you began this life doubly cursed. The fact that you are descended from Adam and Eve means that you have inherited their guilt and their sinful flesh. As if that weren't enough, we daily sin much. We lust. We covet. We gossip. We get angry. We act in greed. We fail to trust God. Our sin clings to our flesh like leprosy, condemning us and killing us, separating us from God.

But Jesus has healed you. He was cursed in your place. He took your guilt and nailed it to the cross, killing it forever. You have been forgiven. You have been healed. You have been set free by Jesus. You see in the Man of Nazareth, God Himself who came down to earth to show mercy, to heal, to restore. You see that every good thing that is given to you comes through this Man. You see that all the ways in which God has provided for you and blessed you are because of Jesus, because He hung on cross, died, and rose again. Instead of getting what you deserved, you got Jesus!

And so you have returned here, to fall at Jesus' feet and give thanks. You lift your voices in prayer and song, praising God for healing your soul. You give Him thanks for His mercy, for providing you with all of your daily bread, for healing your sicknesses, for giving you strength to endure the trials and hardships. And you return here because it is here that you find Jesus. Here Jesus comes to you as He came to the lepers. He comes here to bless you. He comes here to comfort you. He comes here to save you. What better reason could we have to thank Him?

And do you know the best way to thank Jesus? Take what He gives you. Open your ears and open your mouths. Let Jesus fill you to overflowing with His mercy. He loves to give. He loves to give to you. Thanks be to God! Thanks be to Jesus!

In the Name of +Jesus. Amen.