



Pentecost 18-October 13th, 2019
Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish
Luke 17:11-19 (Prayers for Healing Service)

¹¹On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, ¹³they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” ¹⁴When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. ¹⁶He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? ¹⁸Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

“Jesus Heals”

- Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Grace and peace to you from God our father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

After hearing the gospel for today, you might think that Jesus was the first male to have been accused of being too stubborn to stop and ask for directions. The way the first verse is written from the gospel of Luke it would appear that Jesus is lost. It says, “On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee.” Jerusalem is the southernmost of the locations mentioned. Galilee is the most northern, with Samaria between these two locations. It appears that Jesus Christ wasn’t following MapQuest’s directions for the shortest path to his destination and he didn’t stop and ask for directions as he traveled from Samaria to Galilee on the way to Jerusalem.

But of course, Jesus was not lost. Jesus was just where he needed to be. Jesus was within hearing distance of people in need of mercy. And today his mercy was delivered in the form of a physical healing to 10 lepers.

The bible doesn’t follow the rules of political correctness by describing the 10 people that called out to Jesus by calling them lepers. These 10 were labeled by their illness much like when people are described as addicts, unemployed, or homeless. Today we would try to be more careful and say that these were people afflicted with leprosy. But in this story of healing, there were more rules broken than political correctness.

The ten lepers were following the rules of people afflicted with leprosy by calling out to Jesus. They didn’t come close to Jesus. They cried out from a distance. People afflicted with leprosy were to keep a distance which some say was a distance of 500 feet to prevent further spread of this terrible skin disease. When Jesus sees the lepers, it is interesting that he doesn’t tell the lepers that he is going to heal them. Instead, he says, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” The 14th chapter in Leviticus (which is 3 pages long in my bible) describes what the priest does when he sees them. The examination by the priest takes place outside of the camp away from “clean” people. If the priest’s examination determines that the person is cured of leprosy, there follows a long list of additional rituals that must take place involving two living clean birds, cedarwood, crimson yarn, hyssop, fresh water, earthen vessels, two male lambs, a grain offering, blood from a lamb, use of your right finger dipped in

oil put on the lobe of the right ear and thumb of the right hand, turtle doves are needed and the list of rituals goes on and on. And this is the list of things you need to do when you no longer have the disease!

One of the ten lepers broke every one of these rules. As he was walking along with the other nine to show himself to the priest, he looked at himself and noticed that he had been healed. As soon as he realized that Jesus had mercy on him by healing him, he disregarded the long list of rituals that the priest required. Instead, he turns around and goes to Jesus and gives thanks. He didn't know why he should have to do anything else since the healing was complete. This one leper knew the difference of knowing that he was completely healed by Jesus compared to the uncertainty of the examination and rituals of the priest. This one Samaritan who have been healed by Jesus, thought there was no need to go to someone else for a second opinion.

It can be easy for us to take the role of Jesus being the main character in this story as the one who heals and give it to the one Samaritan who returned and thanked Jesus. But before we turn the spotlight from Jesus and let it shine on the Samaritan, we need to be reminded that Jesus didn't decide to heal only this one leper because he knew that this one Samaritan would be grateful. Nor did Jesus reverse the healing of the 9 lepers when they failed to be thankful. Jesus healed all 10 lepers regardless of what they did or failed to do. But Jesus wondered where the other nine went. And we are told that they went to the priest. The 9 didn't believe that Jesus had done enough. They needed more proof that they were healed. They trusted more in what the priest would do after they were already healed rather than simply thank Jesus for what he had done.

This chapter in Luke is a pivotal point in the ministry of Jesus. Up to this point, the crowds that were following Jesus gathered around him to have their physical needs healed. So, as he is traveling in this region between Samaria and Galilee, he does another healing for these lepers that called out to him. But Jesus is not staying in this place. He has a greater mission. He is on the way to Jerusalem. But in Jerusalem a cross is waiting for Jesus. Suffering and death are waiting for Jesus. Jesus' suffering and death on the cross will put an end to our sickness of sin as Jesus is raised from the dead.

And when Jesus declares that your sins are forgiven, you don't need to wonder about it. You don't need to ask anyone else if this is really true. There is nothing more for you to do but to be thankful.

After Jesus rose from the dead, this was not the end to Jesus' concern for your physical needs. Jesus still wants you and I to call out to him just as the 10 lepers did when we have needs of physical healing in this life. Jesus is never in a place that he doesn't hear your prayer.

This week as we served the banquet, I was interrupted of my pan washing duties when a member of our parish in visiting with a guest that they had been diagnosed with skin cancer that day. They wanted to know if someone would say a prayer for healing for them. I thought about this story of how Jesus who was on the way to Jerusalem stopped what he was doing to speak a word of healing. So, I left the pans and prayed for healing.

In the prayers of healing service today, you can call out to Jesus for healing. And Jesus who is the giver of health and salvation will hear your prayer and will come near. In this life, we also rely on many other people to assist in the healing of body and mind. But Jesus gives you the faith to face each of these trials in this earthly life.

But also, in today's service, in the Lord's Supper, you as a sinner (and this is a good name for you and me) will call out to Jesus to grant you mercy and forgiveness to deliver you from your sins. Just as the Samaritan noticed that he had been healed by Jesus and did nothing more, as you eat and drink the body and blood of Jesus Christ you will also be confident that your sins are forgiven and there is nothing more for you to do but to simply give thanks.

Our service will end today by singing the hymn "Now Thank We All Our God". As we pray for physical healing and receive spiritual healing today, we will as the hymn declares "Give all praise and thanks to God in this life and the next." And Jesus responds to you, giving you nothing more to do. He simply says to you, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well." Amen.