

Your Faith Has Saved You **Luke 17:11-19**

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

It is interesting that this text is not only the Gospel lesson for the fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, it is also the Gospel text for Thanksgiving. You are blessed to hear it twice a year! Of course, it also means that it comes up twice a year and I consider if I should write the sermon you will hear upon that text.

Well today is that Sunday. Can I find something fresh and new to say? Is that truly even the goal? Or is the goal to say something faithful to God's Word? Yes, that is the goal, so maybe what I mean is, can I find something to say that will keep your attention for the next 12 to 17 minutes – something that will not have you dozing after thinking, “well, this is nothing I haven't heard before.”

What are the highlights of this text? Ten lepers meet Jesus between Samaria and Galilee and asked, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us?” It is obvious they are beseeching Him to heal them. Jesus's reply, “Go and show yourselves to the priest,” declares to them that something has changed in their condition, that he was willing to heal them. This is easy to understand, for that was the protocol in the day. In order for lepers to return to family and community, they had to be declared clean by the priests. So, Jesus' telling them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests” is like saying, “You are cleansed, made holy, able to return to community, and temple.”

One of them, on the way to the priests notices he is healed. He goes back, praising God with a loud voice, and falls at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks. It appears that Jesus then berates the nine for not coming to give thanks by asking, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” And then Jesus tell the Samaritan to go his way, “Your faith has made you well.”

You have heard the sermons that look at the unthankfulness of the nine, and how we are often like them. We ask God for healing, we may even incorporate our Christian brothers and sisters into praying for our healing, and when healing happens, who do we thank?

You know the conversations you have had with others when finally there was relief. You and I are the world's greatest evangelists, we are only to glad to speak to other the good news. “Dr. Schmedlap is amazing! I had gone to a couple others for my condition, but he was the only who figured it out and did the work necessary to fix it. If you are having that issue, you should go to him.”

“I tried Tylenol, I tried Advil, but nothing would relieve the pain until I tried Aleve. Seriously, Aleve is the greatest, you should try it.”

Yes, we will extol doctors, medications, we might even say “thank you” to the ones who we knew were praying, “Thank you, your prayers healed me.” But it was not the doctor, or the

medication, nor even the prayers that healed – it was God! It is God who gives the wisdom to the doctors and the pharmaceutical people to do what they do. It is God who heals, according to His grace and mercy. For sometimes His mercy demands that He answers our prayers with a “no” or with “wait”.

The incredible doctors? The wonderful medications? The prayers of our friends?

It was not the doctors, medications, or even our friends who healed us, it was God. But, are our voices heard as witness to God’s mercy and grace to heal? To whom, or to what, is our thanks directed? Or sometimes to none at all?

Is Jesus berating people for that lack of thankfulness to God for healing their illnesses?

But even more, let us look at Jesus’ words at the end of our text, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.” Actually that is a pathetic translation of the Greek into English. It is not the Greek word Luke uses for heal, *therapeuo* – it is *sodzo*, save. So, Jesus words should actually read, “Rise and go your way; your faith has saved you.” And, in a good English translation, a footnote will state that.

You are probably wondering, “Does it matter?”

Have you ever noticed that in numerous places, when Jesus heals someone, he tells those gathered not to tell anybody about it? Why would He instruct them *not* to say anything? Because they usually praise Him for the wrong thing, they usually rejoice about the temporal fix.

Every healing Jesus does is outward evidence of the greater miracle. You could say that the physical ailment is only an outward symptom of a greater disease. This means that when Jesus does the healing, He has done something greater than what is outwardly visible.

Unfortunately, we only want the outwardly visible. Ten lepers saw Jesus, they had the faith to believe that they could heal them, so they called out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”

Jesus’ response was an affirmation of their faith, He had mercy on them and sent them to have that affirmed by the priests. He granted to them what they believed. But sometimes faith only goes so deep, sometimes faith is dependent upon the world around us. Too often, we see things only with worldly eyes and want only God’s blessings in regard to the things in this life.

Let me have the happiness of being with my family – heal my leprosy.

Let me have the joy of fingers and toes that will not rot off my body – heal my leprosy.

Let me be able to gather with my friends for the fantasy football draft – heal my leprosy.

Dear friends, leprosy is not just the outwardly visible sores, the rotting of flesh, the terrible stench of gangrene, and something to be avoided by others because it is so contagious. It is an illness that begins inside the body and rots to the outside. It is walking death, for that is what is flowing in the veins of those who have it, for it is all that leprosy brings and why it smells of death. What is seen on the outside is only symptomatic of the deeper disease.

“Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks.”

Do you understand what this is all about? When he saw that he was healed, he understood God was at work – and so “he returned praising God,” and fell prostrate, with his face to the ground at the feet of Jesus. He praised God by give God thanks – by giving Jesus thanks.

This Samaritan, an Israelite, one who knew the ceremonial law of cleanliness, understood that the root cause of his leprosy was gone. God had mercy upon him and had granted him life, new life, eternal life – God in Christ Jesus had mercy upon him, cleansing him of the root cause of his leprosy, granting him forgiveness.

"Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" "Were not all ten granted mercy, cleansed of all sin and death? Were not all ten granted forgiveness and returned from death to life? Did none of the others understand that mercy comes not just in the physical healing, but the healing of forgiveness was granted to them – healing that grants life eternal?"

The Samaritan understood, and so he returned to Jesus. He came back to Him who is God enfleshed to thank Him for His gracious visitation. He thanked Him for healing and life, for forgiveness and life everlasting. He had faith which grasped the greater and deeper things which Jesus did for Him.

This One before whom He knelt He understood to be the One who came to take death into Himself and grant healing and life. This Jesus before whom He bowed was none other than God the suffering servant, who crucified the flesh and all its passions and desires. Who died and rose to grant new life and salvation.

It is he who said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has saved you."

I a poor miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I ever offended You, and justly deserve Your temporal and eternal punishment, but I am heartily sorry for them, and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of **Your boundless mercy**, and for the sake the innocent, bitter suffering, and death of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor sinful being.

And the called ministers of Christ speak His word of absolution at His command, and healing for life and restoration to the community are granted, "Rise and go your way; your faith has saved you."

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.

You hear the Word of Christ proclaimed to you, and salvation is spoken into your ears, "Rise and go your way; your faith has saved you."

Children are brought to the font, like little Sophie today. At Christ's command water is applied in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! Death is destroyed, life granted as sins are forgiven. "Rise and go your way; your faith has saved you."

You come forward today to eat of the very flesh of Christ pierced for you, and to drink of the very blood He shed for the forgiveness of your sins. You come kneeling before Jesus to receive His mercy because you know that in this meal you receive Christ's life and salvation. And He gives it to you, take eat; this is my body given for you. Take drink; this is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. "Rise and go your way; your faith has saved you." And so you do, in the name of Jesus. Amen.