

Lectionary 28 proper 23 Pentecost C 16

October 9, 2016

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.
Amen.

The Old Testament and Gospel lessons are often seen as stories of healing, but I say they are also accounts of restoration and thanksgiving. Both include an outsider who is healed from his leprosy who in recognition returned to give glory to God and offer words of thanksgiving for the healing they received.

So how do you give thanks and for what do you give thanks? A philosopher, Eric Hoffer once said, 'The hardest arithmetic to master is that which enables us to count our blessings.' How true that statement often is.

When I teach the confirmation youth and the last thing we do at the end of class is I force them to take time for prayer. So I ask them to go around and offer up to God one request, something they are struggling with or to pray for someone in need. The other thing I ask of them is to speak a word of thanksgiving, to say thank you to God for something good that happened in their life. Many weeks there is more than one of them who struggle to speak a word of thanksgiving. Some of them even have multiple problems or requests and nothing for which they are thankful for.

How does that square in your life. When you turn to prayer do you spend time giving thanks in addition to the prayers of healing or strength to overcome the struggles in life? Do you take time to write that thank you note? Do you take time to return and offer a word of thanksgiving? Do your actions reflect the thankfulness you feel?

I am often reminded of my need to not only offer my prayers up to God but to do so with thanksgiving. It comes in what I often say are my life verses from Philippians 4; *'Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplications with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts*

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and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Here I am reminded that my prayers are not only for giving up my worries and concerns to God, but in the same way I am to do so with thanksgiving.

So I want to take a moment to turn back to the healing story of the ten lepers and see the example of how we might respond when we receive God's mercy in our lives. Also just a reminder that while we often when hear these stories we imagine Jesus as a kind of hero and the others as ungrateful or undeserving recipients of his mercy, we often forget how radical Jesus was by going where good faithful people did not go. That Jesus often spent time with outsiders, with people the rest of society shunned or at least did not associate with.

Jesus and his disciples were on their way to Jerusalem. As they journey through the border country, the no man's land of the day they were approached by ten men. These men were there because it was the only place they were allowed to be. They were respectful of the culture, as they kept their distance, but they knew and understood who Jesus was. They called to him, pleading with Jesus calling out, 'Master, Have mercy on us.' One thing we often do not hear is that in Luke the only other people to use the term Master for Jesus were the disciples. So we know these ten lepers believe Jesus is capable of showing them mercy and in healing them.

Jesus only response is to tell them to go and show themselves to the priest. There was no mention of healing, and the only reason for them to show themselves to a priest would be so they could be declared clean. In their culture where there were no doctors to diagnose a disease or to proclaim a cure, it was the priest whom determined if a person had such a disease and then to ban them from the community and from their family. As a result it

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was the priest who was the only person who would also be able to declare them clean so they might return to their life within the community and to their family.

These ten men obeyed Jesus, heading off to find a priest, to show themselves as commanded. It was while they journeyed that they were made clean. Yet just one of them, upon realizing what had taken place, could not do anything else but to defy this command and return to find Jesus giving thanks and glorifying God.

Now sometimes the nine who continued on their way are vilified because they did not also return. But they did nothing wrong, we can only guess they went and did as Jesus told them and as the culture expected of them.

It was the Samaritan who saw things differently which caused him to return to give thanks to Jesus for his healing. After Jesus raises the question asking about the other nine, Jesus turns and sends him on his way once again. But this time the man leaves not only made well, but made whole. For Jesus says, 'go your faith has made you well, your faith as saved you.'

This man leaves being restored to his life, having been made clean and allowed back into the community and back into relationship with his family and he does so restored, claimed and blessed as a child of God. Here is a turning point in his life for which he will ever be changed.

Being thankful and being faithful go hand in hand. Yet so often we separate one from another when it comes to our relationship with God. Whenever we take time to thank others or to offer our thanks to God, we are blessed and restored and made whole, for those blessing are returned to us in ways we may never know or be aware of. It is here each week where we come to be in community to offer thanks and praise to God for the mercy we have

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received this week. It is here around Christ's table we receive forgiveness and share in the great thanksgiving for the meal Jesus gave us. Then from here we are sent to go back into the community to share the good news, to offer thanks to God for the mercy we have received.

So I invite you to join me in this prayer of thanksgiving this day. We give you thanks O God, for those who love us and watch over us, who become for us your hands and feet in a time of need. We give you thanks O God, for the many blessings, for the many possessions you have entrusted to us. Help us to be a blessing in the way we share and use them for the benefit of others. We give you thanks O God, for the harvest and the bounty you have provided. Guide us in ways so it can be shared with those who are hungry and in need. We give you thanks O God, for the ways in which we have been healed and made well. Lastly we give you thanks O God, for the gift of your Son, our Savior who has offered us your mercy, forgiven us and restored us to life and who has made us whole. In his name we pray, Amen.

T.G.B.T.G.

Pastor Michael

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Luke 17:11-19

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