

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Sunday October 9, 2022

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

Deacon Robert Millott

Scripture: Luke 17:11-19

Remembering to Give Thanks and Praise to Our Father

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my mouth be acceptable in your sight, O LORD my rock and redeemer. AMEN.

Ps19:14

This morning's Gospel reading is very similar to the one in 2 Kings 5:15-19 where Naaman, who was a Gentile and commander in charge of the Syrian army, had leprosy. He heard about a man of God named Elisha who could do healing. So, Naaman went down to Israel with a letter of introduction from his king, asking the king of Israel to heal him. The king of Israel was frustrated and tore his clothes because Syria and Israel were not on the best of terms. When Elisha heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he asked the king to have Naaman to come see him. Naaman came to Elisha and Elisha told him to go down to the river and wash seven times. Naaman could not understand why, the rivers in Samaria were just as good if not better he thought. He refused, but his servants said to him *"My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it?"* 2 Kings 5:13. Naaman went down to the river and washed himself seven times as he was told and his flesh was restored as a little child. When Naaman went back to Elisha he said to him *"Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel."* 2 Kings 5:15. Naaman wanted to give Elisha some gifts but Elisha refused them. Naaman asked for and received two mule loads of dirt to take back to Syria so he could build an altar to worship

the LORD. Elisha gave him the dirt and told him *“Go in peace.”* 2 Kings 5:19.

The second story about a leper is taken from Luke 5:12-15. Shortly after Jesus had called His First Disciples there was a man who had leprosy and came up to Jesus and fell at His feet. The leper did not keep his distance as the law required. He begged to be healed. Jesus touched the unclean man and healed him. For a good Jew to do that that was a no no. Then the man did as Jesus told him to do, according to the law of Moses, to go and show himself to the priest with an offering for his cleansing. Jesus also told him not to tell anyone how he was cleaned. But as is usually the case, that is when people go and tell.

Now we come to today’s Gospel reading. Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem for His passion, the ultimate price for our salvation. There were ten lepers in a colony on the border when Jesus stopped, they kept their distance and in a loud voice asked Jesus to have mercy on them, in other words to heal them. They undoubtedly had heard about Jesus’s healing people in Galilee and now wanted Him to do the same for them. Jesus did not touch them as he did the previous leper who knelt at His feet and asked for healing. Jesus just told them to show themselves to the priest as the Mosaic law required them to do. The ten were cleansed on their way to the priest because they obeyed Jesus. **Of the ten only the Samaritan came back to Jesus and he too fell at Jesus’ feet giving Him thanks.** Luke wanted to be sure we know the man was a Samaritan. Jesus told the man to *“Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”* Luke 17:19. Here the man was more than physically healed, his soul was healed too. Nine lepers fell into thankless forgetfulness, the nine were Jews that did not return to give glory to God. By this Luke is telling us that Israel was hard of heart and utterly unthankful. The stranger however, who was a Samaritan, was of a foreign race brought from Assyria. He, after seeing he was cleansed

returned to Jesus and with a loud voice gave glory to God. Luke shows us that the Samaritan was grateful but that the Jews, even when they had benefited, were very ungrateful.

In the several stories of people with leprosy in the Bible, you may have noticed, they always kept a distance from those they spoke to except the one I just mentioned who fell at Jesus' feet. Jewish law forbade them from getting close and they were to stay that way until they were CLEAN again and a priest declared them to be clean. Naaman did not because he was a Gentile but the leper who fell at the feet of Jesus did.

Now this may seem unusual because there were ten lepers. Vs 11-14 in today's reading is a healing story where there is a cry for help and Jesus responds. The healing in this story happens in the act of obedience, whereas in Luke 5:12-16 the man who fell at Jesus's feet asking to be healed, his healing happened prior to his obedience in going to the priest. The second part of today's Gospel is about salvation to a foreigner, the Samaritan. Of the ten who were healed only one was saved.

Our Gospel today anticipates what is going to happen in Acts when the blindness of Israel grows even more and the reception of the Gentiles to the Gospel grows. **Israel's special place with God had turned upon itself, their duty became a privilege, and frequent favors had become commonplace.** There are many reasons for that and they are complex. We are not permitted to point the finger here as to why. It is like when a stranger who comes to a church who will sing heartily the hymns that have long been left to choirs to sing, who expresses their gratitude for their blessings they had not noticed, who will listen to a sermon the congregation may have heard before, who gets excited about the Bible,

and who becomes actively involved with acts of service to which people send small donations. Does it have to be this way?

Religion was invented by people so they could manipulate their god or deity. They would do this by offering sacrifices of some sort. They would offer up to temple prostitutes, sacrifice babies or adults to their various gods. They did this to verify if their religion was valid or not. Our God and Father does not need anything from us. After all he made heaven and earth. He's got the whole world in His hands. We have nothing that God needs.

God, however, wants us. The nature of the Trinity shows us that God is only God in His relationship to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He sent Jesus to live among us because God wants us in relationship. All He wants from us is our thanksgiving for the great gifts He has given us. Just prayers, praise, and thanksgiving.

God is grace and you already know that it is undeserved love. We can't earn it. The Bible is filled with many places where God's grace abounds. When God freed the slaves in Egypt to go to the Promised Land, He sent Judges and Prophets who spoke the words God gave them to the people. By His grace He sent Jesus, His only Son, to die for our sins and bring all those who believe in Him to His Kingdom.

I want to turn to page 332 in your Book of Common Prayer to Psalm 50: 9-12 and follow along as I read the psalm.

I will take no bull calf out of your house, no he-goat out of your folds. For all the beasts of the forest are mine, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and the wild beasts of the field are in my sight. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the whole world is mine, and all that is therein.

As I mentioned earlier there is nothing, we can give God because He already has it all.

When a person gets healed that is a wonderful experience for them and for their loved ones too. But healing is not salvation. Only belief in the Lord Jesus will give a person salvation.

Our Gospel reading shows there were ten lepers who were healed and only one of them returned to give Jesus thanks. He knew Jesus was a Holy Man. God has never asked for us to do anything for Him, but give Him thanks and praise.

The word *well* in Luke 17:19 means saved in Greek. The sole leper, the Samaritan, by his faith received God's most gracious gift and the Samaritan returned and gave praise and thanksgiving for his healing.

God deserves our gratitude and people should not be upset giving God one hour or so of praise and thanksgiving on a Sunday morning. Yet some people think they can just sit home or on the golf course and think nothing of it. We come here on Sunday mornings to hear God's Holy Word, to confess our sins and hear we are forgiven, to receive grace and blessing in the Holy Eucharist. Everything we have is a gift from our Father and that is why giving thanks and showing gratitude is important.

I have a book, *When God Winks At You*, by Squire Rushnell that is about How God Speaks Directly to You Through the Power of Coincidence. The book list many instances that people may miss as being a gift from God or a small blessing. I am happy to lend to anyone who would like to read it. Amazon, I am sure, still has copies. The stories in the book are all true too.

I would like you all to turn to page 25 of your Book of Common Prayer and pray with me the General Thanksgiving.

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.