

THE SERMON SUPPLY



A Resource from
Region 6



Lectionary 28, Year C

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Deacon for Baptized Living

18th Sunday after Pentecost: Gospel Text - Luke 17:11-19

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 men with a skin disease 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's feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? So where are the other nine?" ¹⁸ Did none of them return to give glory to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

SERMON TEXT:

Healing and cleansing and faith. (Oh my!)

That's a lot of topics with a lot of baggage all at once. Care of creation meets healthcare, meets stigma and ostracism, insiders and outsiders, Samaritans and foreigners, maybe even faith and doubt.

But, good news! This is also a story about Jesus, and faith, and maybe even baptism. And because it *is* Jesus, it will always turn out to be good news.

Jesus is traveling with his disciples when a group of men interrupt. Because they had a skin disease, they were stigmatized, ostracized, and just plain shut out of their previous lives. They hung around on the margins. They had almost nothing. But somehow they heard about Jesus.

“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

That's all it takes. Jesus commands them to show themselves to the priests, the appropriate way to rejoin the community, and they are healed.

Just one returns to Jesus, praising God loudly. And that one turns out to be a Samaritan, the ultimate outsider here. Oh dear. How dare he! "...where are the other nine?" Jesus asks "Did none of them return to give glory to God ...?" and then "go on your way; your faith has made you well."

So, in just those verses:

- We notice who is in and who is out, and how that changes when Jesus steps in.
- We witness, yet again, Jesus healing with just a word.
- We see ten people restored, nine of whom did in fact follow directions.
- Yet, the tenth does something more: he returns to give praise and glory to God. It's not about gratitude you'll notice, but giving to God what is God's.
- What, then, does it mean that his faith has made him well?

The lectionary pairs this text with the story of Naaman, the Syrian general in 2nd Kings. Like the gospel story, there's also a foreigner – in this case a powerful enemy – and there's a skin disease that will make him an outcast, too. There's an unexpected request. The healing, which is also a cleansing, comes not from Naaman's political power, not from Elisha the great prophet, not even from the storied waters of the Jordan, but from God directly. And at the end, someone gives God the glory.

So, again:

- We notice who is in and who is out, and how that changes when God steps in.
- We witness, yet again, God healing according to a word.
- We see a sick man restored to health and to society.
- And he also returns and says "...there is no God in all the earth except in Israel..."
- What does all of this mean for us?

Healing, and cleansing, and faith.

We could in fact do a whole thing about how washing your hands is good for your health, but bathing in whatever body of water is closest to you – might or might not be. And even in definitely clean water, humans are not so good at this healing, and cleansing, and faith stuff. and yet we still want to be responsible for all of it.

And that is where baptism comes in.

There are some parallels.

- In baptism, everyone is allowed in. There are no insiders and outsiders in the body of Christ.
- In baptism, we witness a simple act of water and word, according to God's command and accompanied by God's

promises. It brings forgiveness, redemption, and salvation, restoring us to life again and again. (That's all straight from the Small Catechism.)

- And after baptism, we too return to give glory to God, making promises of our own as we live in the faith that is a gift of God, too.
- What does this mean for us?

Our promises don't make the baptism – God does. The water doesn't make the baptism – God does. We don't even ultimately do faith on our own – that, too, is something God does. Yet we still make promises, we still live a new life in baptism, because neighbors, our world, and even our own selves need help.

We need healing. We need cleansing. We need faith. And so, like the Samaritan leper, like Naaman the general, we give praise to God for the gifts of baptism. We live among God's faithful people, learning to become faithful ourselves. We hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper, becoming disciples together. We proclaim the good news of healing and rebirth through word and deed, and turn back to the world to love and serve our neighbors, be they foreigners, Samaritans, outcasts, or even friends. We feed and clothe and heal. We welcome outsiders, and see enemies as neighbors, and refuse to wrangle and judge and belittle with our words. That's faith in real life: following the way of Jesus. And you can be a part of it.

Healing, and cleansing, and faith, can be real, and not only in old stories, in our everyday lives. That's good news, too.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

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