

Luke 17:11-19

Ten Healed of Leprosy

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked,

"Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

Sermon 2006 Thanksgiving

Text: Luke 17:11-19

Theme: "Happy Guilt Ridden Greedy Imperialist American Pig Day"

Political correctness abounds all around us and Thanksgiving tends to be an especially guilt ridden day for the average American, especially those of us from European descent. We're not supposed to think of the Pilgrims as the heroes who settled this land because they apparently eventually killed the Indians. Of course we're not supposed to say Indians but rather Native Americans, not because Native American is a native American word but because we need to remind ourselves that they were here first before we imperialist European pigs took away the land and made it prosper with the forced labor of thousands of Asians and Africans most of whom were imported very much against their will.

So I was sitting in the congregation one Thanksgiving and some yahoo from the far left coast was preaching. He berated us for being fat, slovenly spoiled brats who would go home and eat until we nearly split while the vast majority of the world goes hungry. He used this very text that we have before us today and compared us to the lepers who trundled off, got healed and then

ignored the Lord once they had gotten what they wanted. I went home that Thanksgiving feeling properly berated although I don't remember the turkey tasting any the worse for it.

However, as I indulged in my third piece of pie, something hit me. "HEY! Wait just a minute. I'm not one of the nine lepers! I returned to the Lord and worshipped! That preacher was trying to get me to be guilty for having blessings in my life. If we have a warm home and food on the table, should we feel guilty for that?

I cannot find any place in the Bible where Jesus gives us gifts and then says we should be guilty for having them. Imagine buying someone the exact thing he wants for his birthday. Do you want him to feel guilty for enjoying that gift? So why would Jesus want us to be guilty over the gifts he has given us? He is indignant over the nine lepers in this text but not because they received the gift of healing but because they were ungrateful.

But you and I have returned! We have returned to thank Jesus, not only today but every time we worship him. 10 lepers stood at a distance and called for Jesus to help them. They were

in dire straights and they had heard that this Jesus of Nazareth could help them. How many prayers are uttered under similar circumstances? Both the faithful and the unfaithful are known to pray loudest and hardest when they are really helpless and really frightened. All 10 lepers were helpless and frightened but nine just wanted what Jesus could offer. Only one wanted a relationship with him.

It is not really different today. The nine lepers still show up around here when things are bad, when there is tragedy in their lives, when there is financial hardship, when there is unrest in their relationships. They show up and call for Jesus to help them. But once things are back to normal, once the pain is tolerable again – “see ya Jesus”. They come to have their children Baptized. They come when they need someone married or buried or confirmed, but they get offended if we ask them where they are in between times.

“Come on Jesus. Just give me what I want and then leave me alone. Sure I want you now and then, but I’m not a fanatic!”

You and I, on the other hand, have returned today like we returned last week, like we will return again this coming week, not only to thank Jesus for all that he has done in our lives – for all the gifts he has given, but also to worship him and grow in our relationship with him. We all know that everything we have from the money in our bank accounts to the air we breathe is a gift from Jesus, but even if we were destitute. Even if we were living in a refrigerator box on south Wacker, we would still be here today. Because for us, it's not the things that draw us to Jesus. It's not money or houses or cars that make us want a relationship with him. For us it is the wonder of that one singular act – his death and damnation on the cross in our place.

Our Lord did not just heal us of some physical disease. Physical healing is not that big a deal for him. But he healed us of sin. And he did it by taking that sin upon himself and paying for it with his own life and soul. We come here today like that 10th leper. We know what we would be without him and we know what it cost him to save us from that certain hell. We come here today for the same reason we come any day. Just like that 10th

leper, we want to live in the presence of our Savior. As we listen to him speak to us and as we are filled with his body and blood and as the baptismal waters continue to wash us clean, we slowly become one with him and for that we more thankful than words can express. Amen.