

Giving Thanks
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09:40

Giving Thanks
Luke 17: 11-19

Today we heard the story of Jesus and the 10 lepers. Have you heard of leprosy? It is a skin disease like chickenpox or eczema or shingles. People who lived at the time of Jesus thought it was the worst disease anyone could have.

Why?

Leprosy came in mild and severe forms.

- If you had a mild form you got these small blisters or white patches on your skin. Everyone could see them.
- If you got a really bad case you could start to get infections that made you lose parts of your body: your fingers or your toes or your nose.

It was horrible. People were very afraid of those who had leprosy. Why?

- Well, once you got leprosy, there was no way to get rid of it.
- People also didn't know how leprosy was spread so everyone was really afraid that if a leper came to close, wham, they would catch it. People didn't know much about germs back then.
- You had to go see the priest who would kick you out of your community.

So, lepers had to stay away from all people.

- They couldn't work,
- they had to leave their families,
- they couldn't go to the market.
- They were not allowed to go to the Temple to worship God because the priests there would not let them in.

They had to wear big signs like this one that said, "Leper, stay away."

As a leper I couldn't get within 20 feet of you. That means I would have to stand way, way back here and I would still be too close.

Sometimes lepers had to carry bells either on their ankles or in their hands and ring the bells like this so people would know they were coming and they could run away and hide.

So that was your life as a leper. Miserable, lonely, desperate and very sad. You can see why the 10 lepers in today's story stuck together. At least they had each other. But then what happened?

The 10 are coming down the road and they see Jesus. Now they don't go up to Jesus because they can't. They aren't allowed to go near anyone. So they yell to him.

"Hey, Jesus"

(offstage) "Yes"

“Jesus, help us please”

(offstage) “Ok. Go show yourselves to the priest.”

So they started walking back to town and then noticed that they were healed. This terrible disease was gone. It was a miracle!

And so the lepers went off rejoicing and went to see the priest for the priest would examine them and then pronounce that they were clean.

- Only then could see their families again.
- Only then could they worship God again.
- Only then could they work again.

There's no time to waste so off they went.

Wouldn't you?

Jesus had healed them. Their bodies were healed.
But Jesus healed other things too.

- They could take off this sign, the sign that made them so alone. So they could be with people again. Jesus healed their loneliness.
- They could take off this bell. People didn't have to be afraid of them any more.
- They could go to the Temple again to pray to God. Jesus healed their spirit, that part of us inside that longs for God.
- They could see their families again.

And I imagine this one man was so excited...

“Oh my gosh, I'm healed. Oh my, I can see my arms again. Oh, my face is clear. I'm healed. I can see my wife again. And my baby child who is probably 5 now. I can go back to them. I am healed. I can work again. I have missed tending my garden. I have missed milking the cows. I am healed. I can walk free in the streets again. I can go to the Temple. Oh my. Oh my, I am healed.

But then something different happens. He runs back.
He falls down at Jesus' feet and says, Thank you thank you THANK YOU!!”
He takes the time, despite his excitement and joy, to say thank you.

“Thank you thank you thank you. Thank you, master. THANK YOU!!”

(offstage) “Where are the rest of them? I only see one. Where are the other nine?”

And after a moment he says to the grateful man,
“Go, your faith has made you well.”

I've been thinking a lot about this particular leper. Jesus says your faith has made you well. Which I think means that not only was this leper cured of his disease. But that Jesus is saying that he is well in other ways too. His coming back to thank Jesus means his heart is well. He has gratitude which as we learned last week makes us very well.

His faith, his remembering and feeling compelled to thank Jesus, shows us that he is indeed well.

That's the kind of well we should be practicing too. Turning around in our complicated messy lives and saying thank you. And so we give thanks for everything we have, everything,

Thank you!
(offstage) "You're welcome"

Let's try it together. Think about all that you all are thankful for as together we say to Jesus,

Thank you!
(offstage) "You're welcome."

We know that many people today have some of the same problems as the lepers did. They are alone. They have no one around them. People hide from them due to their illness whether physical or mental illness or addiction. Some people feel lost and like God is so very far away. There are lots of people, like the 10 lepers, who need to be healed.

- Healed from hurt,
- healed from addiction,
- healed from loneliness,

And our job as disciples of Jesus, is to help. To see the person as Jesus saw them. With compassion. And out of the gratitude we feel, be the healing presence in their lives
That all people may like the lepers find the glorious healing presence of the kingdom of God in their midst.

Thank you, Jesus.
(offstage) Your faith has made you well.

Amen.