

TRINITY 14

September 17 2017

Old Test: Proverbs 4:10-23

Epistle: Galatians 5:16-22

Gospel: Luke 17:11-19

Standing...

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Recall last week...how the lawyer in our Gospel Lesson
couldn't even bring himself to say the word "Samaritan."

On the heels of that parable comes our reading for today,
a story that has to do with yet another Samaritan—
but this time, it's not a parable. It's a real event.

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our
hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord—our strength and our redeemer.
Amen.

Sitting...

Have you ever been driving—and in the distance,
up at the intersection see a panhandler with his makeshift sign?
And to avoid having to stop where he is right there at your window,
you move over to the farthest lane?
Don't look at me like you've never done that.
I have seen you in my rearview mirror—
following me over to the farthest lane possible.

Sometimes we'd rather not deal with people so needy...

Well, speaking of needy, ten lepers are on the outskirts of town.
Due to their infection, deformities and contagion,
they keep their distance.
The law demanded that lepers not engage with others,
except to warn them of their presence by shouting,
"Unclean, unclean." (Leviticus 13:45)
When that was heard everyone stayed as far away as
possible. They quickly got into the other lane.

However, when the ten learn that Jesus is approaching,
they offer a plea for help.

“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”

What will Jesus do?

Avoid them like everybody else?

Of course not—Jesus hears and sees them—and responds...

Yet our Lord does not immediately heal them.

He could have, but in keeping with the OT law,

He tells the lepers to go show themselves to the priests,
who would examine them,

perform the rite of cleansing and pronounce them
clean.

Priests knew how to do this from Leviticus, chapter 14.

They’d no doubt read it numerous times,

but never used it. They never needed to.

Because...outside of Moses contracting leprosy for just a few
moments,

2) Moses’ sister, Miriam getting leprosy and then being healed,
and

3) Naaman having it—the one who dipped himself in the Jordan
River..¹

Outside of those three, no one was ever healed of leprosy,
though plenty of others contracted it.

So, upon hearing Jesus tell them to go, the lepers do just that,
and as they are going, they are healed.

Feeling returns.

Skin is restored.

Extremities—like fingers, toes, and noses—they reconstitute.

Contagion is gone.

As they feel it themselves and see it with each other, they run.

Getting to the priests and being declared “a-ok” meant they could go back
home—

to hugs and affection of wives and children.

They could go back to work and go back to the synagogue if they did
so.

“Let’s go!” Leaving Jesus in their rearview mirror.

But in all the excitement, in all of the enthusiasm...there’s one—

who pauses, turns...and goes back to Jesus.
 And falling upon his face, he thanks Jesus with his entire being.
 Gang, this man was dead.
 Jesus brought him back to life!

What's his race? A Samaritan.
 What were the other nine? Israelites.
He came unto His own and His own received Him not (John 1:11).

This Samaritan realized that the only Person who heals leprosy is God.
 And now, God was standing right before him in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth.

So how many had the dreaded disease? All ten.
 How many heard about Jesus and made their plea for mercy? All ten.
 How many were healed? All ten.
 But nine went their way—without Jesus,
 whereas one turns back and didn't want to leave Him.

Our Lord even asks, *Were there not ten cleansed?*
 Folks, when omniscience asks a question, it's not for Him—it's for you.
 He follows that up with, *But where are the nine?*
*Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except
 this foreigner?*

Now look—
 We are infected with a devastating disease of our own.
 It's called sin and it's killing us.
 We are, by nature, unclean before God,
 with a flesh prone toward that same list we heard from St. Paul
 —namely,
 the debilitation of **adultery, fornication, uncleanness,
 lewdness,**
 the disfigurement of **idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions &
 jealousies,**
 the rottenness of **outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions,
 dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, and
 revelries...**
 That's us.

But then, just like the ten lepers, we heard the good word about Jesus,

that He came to bear our sins and to take upon Himself the wrath we deserved. We heard He forgives sins to all who come to Him seeking mercy.

And so we came. We were baptized. Cleansed of our sin.

And even though we still carry around the leprous sinful flesh,
we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ
and clean in the sight of God.

But what happens to so many? So many who receive the same gift?

Other things just become more important—friends, family, career,
entertainment, yourself. It's nothing new—nothing new at all.

And I'm referring to the baptized.

I'm referring to the ones who've been given faith.

The ones who have gone through catechesis and have been confirmed.

Now that they've been healed, they forget they are still needy.

Their flesh convinces them...

hearing God's Word and participating in the Means of Grace—
that's not important.

Church life—"Who needs that?"

A life of ongoing repentance—"I don't think so."

Cry out, "*Jesus, Master, have mercy!*"—"ahh, no thanks."

And the struggle against the sinful flesh eventually cools.

What's happening? Jesus is getting put in the rearview mirror.

Oh, they believe at first.

They believe for a while.

But there's a falling away from faith,
back into indifference and unbelief.

This is what your sinful flesh wants to do beloved.

It wants to lead you away from Jesus any way it can,
either by temptation or by false doctrine or by sheer

laziness—

away from the spiritual nutrition that comes from the Word
of God.

But you—this morning,

you have returned.

You have come where needy people come, in faith,
praying for and seeking His mercy.

Which He freely gives, whereby you offer your thanks for the
mercy shown.

You are like the Samaritan who fell at Christ's feet,
and you hear our Lord say,
"Rise and go; your faith has saved you."

God confronts us all today with the ten lepers—
with the nine who go on about their lives,
and with the one who turns back.

Know that our merciful Lord Christ has come near to you again today in
Word and Sacrament, because He knows you need His forgiveness again,
and His strength.

He knows your flesh is strong and is tugging at you to indulge in wickedness,
to pursue your own self-interests, to turn Jesus into an afterthought in your
life.

He has come near to help, to forgive and to strengthen, and also to receive
your thanks as you gather around Him in His Eucharist where He is truly
present...all for you.

Might we all—might we all—be faithful unto death.

In the Holy Name of Jesus, Amen.

Standing...

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your
hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ See Exodus 4:6-7, Numbers 12:10, II Kings 5