

TRINITY 14

September 2 2018

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.

The Psalmist in Psalm 116 says,

"I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice, and my pleas for mercy."

Words of gratitude—words of thanksgiving.

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...

Ten lepers are on the outskirts of town.

Due to their infection, deformities and contagion,
they keep their distance.

The law demands 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 steered clear.

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

"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Help us!

This prayer—the prayer of the 10 lepers—has been incorporated into our liturgy.
It's called the Kyrie, and you have already sung it this morning.

When the pastor says,

"In peace let us pray to the Lord" the response is, "Lord, have mercy."

"For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise."

"Lord, have mercy." It's as if Jesus were standing before us
when we make this pleas for mercy,
because He is.

The lepers call out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."

So what will Jesus do? Avoid them like everyone else?

Of course not—Jesus hears them, sees them—and responds...
for He is merciful to all who call upon Him.

Yet, our Lord does not immediately heal.

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

He tells the lepers to show themselves to the priests,
 who would examine them,
 perform the rite of cleansing, a rite lasting eight days, (Lev. 8:10)
 and who afterwards would pronounce them clean—
 so they could rejoin society.

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

They'd no doubt read it, 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 told to dip himself in the Jordan River...¹

Outside of those three, no one was ever healed of leprosy,

though plenty of people contracted it,

and when they did—it was a curse.

Listen to more of Psalm 116—it begins...

¹ I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.

² Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

³ The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.

⁴ Then I called on the name of the Lord: "O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!"

⁵ Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful.

Gang, we simply cannot escape the fact that we have contracted a disease as well—
 one far worse than leprosy.

I'm referring to the sinful, spiritual disease that dwells in our flesh—
 in the flesh of all people.

It's the infectious, inherited corruption that runs throughout our race,
 passed down from Adam and Eve after they fell into sin.

This disease is the source of every wicked work
 every vile word and thought.

If I could cut it out of you, I would.

If I could cauterize it, I would.

If I could radiate it, eradicate it, obliterate it out of you,
 I'd tie you down and do it.

But those procedures will not work for the soul.

They will not work...

in dealing with the awful disease of sin.

We need something only God can do.

Jesus tells the lepers to go, and they do,
 and as they are going, they are healed.

Feeling returns. Skin is restored.

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

This is miraculous!
 Contagion is gone and what was considered the curse of God
 is removed.

As the men feel it and see it happening to each other,
 my guess is, they start sprinting.

Getting to the Temple and being declared “a-ok” by the priests
 meant they could go back home—
 to the hugs of children and affection of wives.
 They could go back to work, to the market to synagogue.
 Everything previously lost,
 would be received again.

But in all the excitement—in all of the euphoria...there’s one—a Samaritan...
 who stops, turns...and goes back to Jesus, the giver of the gift.

Now look...

It’s a long story, but Jews had no dealings with Samaritans (Jn. 4:9).

Jews and Samaritans even worshiped
 at two separate Temples on two separate mountains. (Jn. 4:20)
 For the Jews, it was on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem.
 For the Samaritans, it was on Mt. Gerizim in Shechem.

So, as the previously leprous Jewish men rush to the Temple in Jerusalem, where was
 the previously leprous Sarmatian man to go?

The Samaritan certainly wouldn’t be welcome in Jerusalem.
 Was he to go to the Temple on Mt. Gerizim, presenting himself there?
 He doesn’t ask.
 And his actions are the scandal of this text.

While the Jews run off to the Temple—which was a type and shadow pointing to Christ,
 the Samaritan runs to Christ Himself, which is the true Temple of God.
 Christ is the Temple to whom the one in Jerusalem always pointed.
 This is exactly what Jesus told the woman at the well...remember?

“Woman,” Jesus says, “Believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain
 (pointing at Mt. Gerizim) nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.” (Jn. 4:21)

And here we have this Samaritan—previously cursed by leprosy—
 bowing at a better Temple than the one at Gerizim or Jerusalem,
 he’s bowing before a greater priest.
 Type and shadow have given way to reality.

Falling upon his face, this man thanks Jesus with his entire being.

Folks, he was dead! Cursed...
 And Jesus brought him back to life—not just in his earthly life,
 but in the life to come!
 Jesus tells him, “Your faith has saved you.”
 Faith always has to have an object.
 And the object of this man’s faith
 is the One standing before him, Jesus.
 Remarkable...

As I said earlier—

we are infected with a devastating disease of our own.
 It’s called Original Sin, and it infects everyone from the moment of conception.
 It has various symptoms, some of which St. Paul listed in our Epistle:
**adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery,
 hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish
 ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness,
 revelries, and the like.** St. Paul then tells us what the judgment of God is:
**I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those
 who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

But then, just like the ten lepers,

Jesus comes to us through the word of His apostles and says,
**Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ
 for the remission of sins. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.**
 And so we were given faith—and were baptized.
 Cleansed by Christ who made us clean.
 And even though we still carry around the leprous sinful flesh,
 we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ—
 unclean to clean,
 broken to healed,
 outcast to restored,
 dead...to alive (Jn. 5:24).
 And our response?
 Gratitude / thanksgiving

Back in Psalm 116 the Psalmist asks,

¹² *What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?*

¹³ *I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord,*

¹⁴ *I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.*

Your merciful Lord Christ has come near you again today in Word and Sacrament.
 He knows you need His forgiveness again, and His strength.

He knows your flesh is strong and tugs at you to indulge in wickedness,
 to pursue your own self-interests,

or to turn away from faith to indifference and unbelief.

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

This is why...you have returned.

Oh sure, there are plenty who think that hearing God's Word and receiving what
Christ wants to give them through His Means of Grace isn't that important.

They aren't here, but you are...

There are plenty who take their salvation for granted and don't really care
if their faith dies. Not you.

You have come where needy people come, in faith.
with the object of your faith being Jesus.

You pray for and seek His mercy.

Which He freely gives,

whereby you offer your thanks for the mercy shown.

You, beloved, are like the Samaritan who fell at Christ's feet,
and thus you can say with the Psalmist,

*"I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice, and my pleas for
mercy."*

And what does He say to you?

"Arise, go in peace, your faith has saved you."

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