

# TRINITY 14

September 5 2021

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.

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 around town—and in the distance,  
at the intersection, you see a panhandler with his makeshift sign?  
Of course you have. We all have.

Yet, to avoid having to stop where he is, right at your window,  
you move over to the farthest lane?  
And maybe pretended to look for something on the floorboard?  
OK, I guess I'm the only one...

Sometimes we'd rather not deal with people who are 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)

This was the original social distancing,  
where people quickly got into the other lane,  
because they're lepers,  
and you didn't want to catch what they had.

However, when the ten lepers learn Jesus is approaching,

they offer a plea for help. They cry, "Master, have mercy on us."

So, what will Jesus do? Will He avoid them like everyone else?

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

though 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 had never used it. They never needed to.

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

2) Outside of Moses' sister, Miriam getting leprosy and then being healed,

3) And outside of Naaman having it—

the one who dipped himself in the Jordan River...!

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

Because Man could not cure it.

The only hope a leaper had, was a miracle.

Which is exactly what these ten lepers receive.

For as they were going, they're healed. Imagine...

Feeling returns.

Lesions vanish.

Skin is restored.

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

The contagion is gone.

As they feel it themselves and see it with each other, my guess is, they start running.

Because getting to the priest and being declared "a-ok" meant they could go home—

back to the hugs and affection of wives and children.

They could go back to work and go back to the synagogue.

However, this healing brought all ten men to a fork in the road—

it was a choice between two paths.

One path led away from Jesus, the Man whom they just called Master—

a path that led straight to the priests.

As I've already said, the priests couldn't heal anyone.

They could only pronounce a man clean or unclean.

They had no remedy for uncleanness.

This path would carry them back to the Law—

the same Law that proclaimed them  
unclean to begin with.

Sure, they would be readmitted to society  
and would live out their lives...  
until...they returned to the dust,  
from which all men are made.

However, the other path, the other Way, is back to Jesus.

This is the path of Wisdom Solomon speaks of.

Thus, in all the excitement, in all the enthusiasm of the moment...

nine continue on their path,

yet one pauses—and abandons the path the others are on,  
and he turns and takes the path back.

And falling upon his face, he thanks Jesus with his entire being.

And so it is with the Kingdom of God, is it not?

The Way of Salvation is the narrow gate,

the path that passes through the eye of the needle.

It's the Way of the Remnant,

the small part sundered from the masses.

Seen very clearly here—just one of ten.

The other nine turn their back on Jesus and head for the priest.

Sure, in their desperation they believed for a moment,

but then being healed, their faith died.

But not so for this one.

He turned his back on the other men,

on the village,

and all it afforded him—

reversing his original course.

And what's his race? He's a Samaritan.

What were the other nine? Israelites.

Which recalls the verse,

*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 Almighty.

And now, God Almighty was standing right before him in the Person of

Jesus of Nazareth. And so, this man is doing what faith always does:

going to Jesus—the source of his faith.

By way of review: 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 is compelled to turn back  
and didn't want to leave Him.

And as a result of that, he's healed differently,  
healed completely.

Not just in his body,  
but his soul is healed by God's Word,  
"your faith has saved you."

This man has no need of the priests,  
for He returned to the True Priest,  
the Great High Priest,  
the Author and Perfecter of salvation.

Now look folks, we are infected with a devastating disease of our own—  
and I'm not talking about Covid.

What a relief—when you get tested for Covid,  
and the results on your phone read...NEGATIVE.

However, when it comes to our sin nature, we test POSITIVE—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 contagion 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. POSITIVE!

And no Man holds the cure.

But then, just like the ten lepers, we heard the good word about Jesus,  
how He encountered human flesh in its most horrible condition  
and took on flesh to save you. He did it by suffering *His flesh*  
to be infected by the lesions of the scourge.

He did it by being put outside of Jerusalem,  
counted as "unclean," to hang condemned on Golgotha's cross,  
covered in your sin, covered in your death. And although He  
cried out just like the lepers did, no one answered His cry.

No one healed Him. No one saved Him.

But praise be to God, He's not dead.

Just as He healed the ten lepers by His own power,  
so did He of His own power take up His life again.

Thus, it is He, the risen Christ, who is the Door.

It is He who opens to you the Way of Salvation, for He is the Way,  
leading you in what Solomon called the "right path",  
the "path of the just",  
the path that shines brighter and brighter  
unto the perfect day, the Last Day—  
when Christ's Church will be ushered into  
her heavenly home.

And so you, just like the ten, you heard. And you were baptized.  
You were cleansed of your sin.

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

And so, you this morning, like the Samaritan  
have returned again.

You have come where needy people come, in faith,  
praying for and seeking God's mercy.

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

Gratefully, you are not like the others who've put Jesus in the rearview mirror of their life  
and walked a different path away from Him.

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

God confronts us all today with these men—  
with the nine who go on about their lives,  
and with the one who turns back to Jesus.

And so, we pray for those who've turned away—which are many.

But for us, 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 tugs at you to indulge in wickedness,  
to pursue your own self-interests,  
and to turn Jesus into an afterthought in your life.

But 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...for you.

Beloved, 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.

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<sup>i</sup> See Exodus 4:6-7, Numbers 12:10, II Kings 5