

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“And he [Jesus] said to him, ‘Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.’”

Luke’s Gospel has Jesus on the move. He’s on a journey to various places, to be sure, but all this is a journey to the cross. Here, in the Gospel reading today, Luke records an event as Jesus was on this journey. “On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.’”

The lepers needed healing. They had been put outside of their communities, outside of their families, and outside of living life. They needed cleansing as only Jesus could give. They are crying out for salvation. That’s what they need, and we need this as well. Salvation is total. It’s the forgiveness of sins, it’s rescue from death and the devil, it’s life itself. So long as we are in this world, though, we are going to be crying out. Even Christians are still living in the here and now. We are saved, we have salvation here and now, to be sure, but we are yearning and longing for that day when the Lord raises our bodies from the grave and we will never again suffer, never again sin, never again be persecuted, tempted, or under attack. We cry out for life eternal. We cry out for mercy.

Is it any wonder this prayer of “have mercy on us” is all throughout the Gospels and in the liturgy of the church? It’s a perfect prayer. It doesn’t matter be it the first century during the time of the Gospels, in 2026, or in the years to come God’s mercy is needed and needed every day. All the lepers in this parable teach us where we are to look for mercy, it’s found only in Christ.

Apart from Christ there is no mercy. God’s mercy is so great in Christ, however, that even unbelievers experience a small measure of it in this life. The rain falls on believers and unbelievers alike. God gives daily bread even to unbelievers. The Father grants breath and life in this world to all out of his mercy in Christ, who reconciled the world to himself. Though temporal, these acts of mercy are evidence of the Lord and his care for us.

As Christians, though, we don’t just have these temporal things, but the eternal things are also ours. For unbelievers, mercy is temporal, and suffering is eternal. The temporal things for us are sin, suffering, and death. Those are but a little while until those things pass and we have a glory beyond compare. Any healing and miracle, then, is a glimpse into the future for us as Christians and this is no different. Healing of this leprosy, which is a broad term in the New Testament that can include any number of various skin diseases, points us to a future restoration.

These lepers, then, were healed by the Lord. “When [Jesus] saw them he said to them, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went they were cleansed.” All the lepers listened to Jesus and that’s something that shouldn’t be overlooked. Our attention is drawn to the one who returned, and rightfully so, but these all heard the word of Jesus and did as he said to do. There is a faith, in so far as they listened and obeyed the word of Jesus, in all of this as they weren’t initially cleansed. They were on the way to show themselves to the priests when this miracle happened. Who these other nine lepers were isn’t revealed to us, but a reasonable guess can be made that these were Jews. As Jews, going to the priest to declare them clean was required by the law in the Old Testament. Noting that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem, these lepers could be heading toward the temple in Jerusalem as well. They were doing as the Lord told them.

It’s at this point when something else happens that is unexpected and shows something key in all of this encounter. “Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, ‘Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’ And he said to him, ‘Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.’”

The Samaritan did what Jesus told him to do. He went to the priest, the Great High Priest, Jesus. The Samaritan goes to the Temple and High Priest. The Samaritan recognized, knew, and believed that Jesus is the Messiah. That's where everything comes together. Time and again Jesus taught this is who he is as he is the fulfillment of the Scriptures and he himself is the Temple made without hands. Interestingly, in John 4, Jesus had a discussion with a woman, who was a Samaritan, about this very thing. "The woman said to him, 'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.' Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he.'"

Dear people of God, cry out for mercy. Lord to whom shall we go? Jesus is your healing, rest, and Temple. He is the promised one, the Christ. Learn from all of this spoken to you today by God about where you find mercy, where you are to go, and where you are to return. Cling to Jesus in all this as one who has been cleansed in the waters of Holy Baptism and has a future glory to come. Keep coming back to the Lord who has cleansed you and will raise you on the Last Day. Don't grow complacent and get caught up in the temporal things, the things of creation, and forget who the Creator is. Refusing to come back to Jesus, where he is found and where he continues to cleanse and heal is unbelief. That's the warning you see in the lepers who didn't return. The Samaritan teaches you what your faith is to look life as you go through this world. Don't forget who you are, who Jesus is, and where you are to go. Repent. Lord, have mercy.

Find rest in Jesus who forgives you. God's mercy is shown to you. Don't doubt that for one instant. Christ has obeyed the law of God, he has suffered for your sin, he has died for you, and he is risen from the grave. All this he did for you. He has made it all yours as he has baptized you. You are his and he is yours as you are journeying through this world and headed toward your eternal home. Unlike a leper, you aren't alone in this, your Lord has cleansed you of your sin and he has gathered you together into the church. Jesus journeys toward the cross in Luke's Gospel but now that your salvation has been accomplished, he, you, and the whole church journeys together in this life and will continue into glory for the church is eternal.

Likewise, give thanks to the Lord in all circumstances as well. Thankfulness is rooted in the Gospel. You see that in the Gospel reading today. By thankfulness, this isn't just generic gratitude or the type of thing your mom made you say when your grandma gave you socks for Christmas when you really wanted a video game. No, thankfulness is rooted in the gospel and flows from the gospel. It gets to the heart of understanding who you are in relation to God and what you have in Christ given to you. Christian thankfulness clings to Jesus and keeps coming back to him. It's your life in Christ as St. Paul writes in Colossians 3, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

The thankfulness you have comes from your faith in Christ. It's a fruit of it. It's seen in your thoughts, words, and lives. The explanation to the First Article of Creed in the Small Catechism lists all of the things God, who has created us, gives to us and we say, "All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true."

Seeing Christ crucified you see all of this and have hope in the very midst of life as death and hell surround you. Baptized into Christ you have been healed as your sin has been washed away and you are cleansed. The healing of the lepers pointed the Samaritan back to the one who is the Great Physician of body and soul. Your Lord who has created you is the same Lord who has redeemed you by his blood. The First Article of the Creed where you are to thank, praise, serve, and obey the Father points to something, the Second Article. See your daily bread, your health, and the things around you and be thankful to be sure. But know this is all because of the Second Article, your redemption. Look at all these things through the lens of Jesus crucified for you.

In faith you say, “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.”

This is who you are in Christ. Your faith has saved you because your faith receives Christ and his benefits. Take courage and have hope as you go through this life called and sanctified by the Spirit through the means of grace. Cling to Christ who has done all things well for you and keep going back to him for he is your life. Hear his word, confess your sin and cling to his forgiveness. Take and eat the body and blood of Christ as your food of immortality. Keep coming back to him in thanksgiving because he is good and this is the where and how God gives, guards, and keep you in the saving faith of Christ and from it produces a new life that thanks him in all circumstances. He orders your days in his mercy and flowing from his word and sacraments you live a thankful life. Go through this life as one who confesses this before God and the world and look forward to that day which is the life to come.

In this life, on this day, Jesus has said to you, “rise, your faith has saved you.” That’s yours now and looks forward to a yet more glorious day to come. On that day Jesus will say to you, “rise from your grave and live with me forever in Paradise.” Until that day give him thanks and with all of God’s people say, “Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed! For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord. Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. The Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.”

Rejoice this day in Jesus who has done all things well. Jesus has mercy on you, and you are his own. Learn what he teaches you and find comfort in your Lord crucified and risen for you. His mercy is abundant and overflows toward you and he keeps calling you back to himself. Give thanks for all his benefits and for what he has done. Give thanks with hearts that have been cleansed and rejoice in the hope he has given to you. Thanks be to God indeed for all of this he has done in this world for you and what future awaits you in the new creation. Cling to him through his holy word and sacraments and walk this journey by faith the Lord has granted to you with the confidence that Jesus says to you what he said to the Samaritan leper, “Rise and go [journey] your way; your faith has made you well[saved you].”

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