

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 17:11-19
September 17th, 2017
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church
Greenville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Show Yourselves to the Priests

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

We are told by the Evangelist St. Luke at the beginning of the Gospel reading that our dear Lord + Jesus Christ is on His way to Jerusalem. When the Evangelists make note of where our Lord is at and where He is going, we should not simply assume that these are just geographical markers that we can look up on a map to trace our Lord's movements. This journey of our Lord to Jerusalem has a specific purpose. This will be the last time that our Lord journeys to Jerusalem. The Evangelist St. Luke is pointing out that our Lord + Jesus is heading to the cross. Our Lord + Jesus is heading to the cross to offer up His life as a ransom for our life. Our Lord + Jesus is heading to Jerusalem to serve as our High Priest, so that He might offer Himself as the Lamb for our atonement. He is heading to Jerusalem to atone for the sins of the whole world. So that those who believe on Him might be made right with God. However, on His way to buy us back from the authority of sin, death and the devil, our Lord is met by ten lepers.

Ten is a complete number. It is the number which represents complete completeness and perfect perfection. It represents the whole lot. And so, spiritually speaking these ten lepers represent all those afflicted with the disease of leprosy, even those who are afflicted with spiritual leprosy. In other words, these lepers represent us. On account of our sin we are spiritual lepers. We are stained with sin. We are filled with the disease of sin. And it is a disease for which there is no cure, as it was at the time of this event in Holy Scripture. There was no cure for what is now known as Hansen's disease, which can be cured by giving the patient a regimen of either two or three drugs for either six or twelve months, depending on what type of leprosy the afflicted has. But, there was no cure for these ten lepers in today's Gospel.

Therefore, St. Luke tells us that these lepers "stood afar off." Their separation is evident. On account of our sin—on account of the leprous nature of sin—we too are separated from our Lord God. Our unrighteous—the filth of our sin—prevents us from being close to the Lord God. We are separated from Him on account of our sin. This is the case with the whole world. They are separated from the Lord God on account of their sin and unbelief. For most in the world they are content to wallow in their sins. But when the weight of their sin comes crashing down upon them, then they cry out to whoever will listen just like these ten lepers.

That is what these ten lepers do: they cry out to the Lord Jesus. Their cry is "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." There are a couple of things to point out about this cry of theirs. First, we are told

that they “lifted up their voices.” In other words, their cry was in unison, and their cry was loud; loud enough to be heard. Second, when we see the word “Master” we think that the lepers are remarking on our Lord’s divinity. But the Greek word is not the word that usually represents this: “Kyrie.” No, they are not identifying our Lord + Jesus as the Lord of All, but simply placing our Lord above themselves. This is significant because it reveals their hearts. There is faith enough in their hearts for them to seek help from the Lord, but their faith does not believe and trust in Him as the Lord and Savior of all mankind.

So then, our Lord + Jesus answers in kind. He doesn’t heal them instantly with a word. He doesn’t place His hands on them each and heals their leprosy right then and there. What does He do? He tells them to “Go show yourselves to the priests.” The priests were the ones who could confirm that the lepers were in fact healed of their leprosy, in order that they might be welcomed back into the synagogue and be able to worship with the rest of the Jews. Well, we are told by St. Luke that as they were on their way they were healed.

There is one, however, upon seeing that He was healed, returned to give thanks to the Lord + Jesus. And he was a Samaritan.

This man—this Samaritan—was doubly cursed. Not only was he full of leprosy, but he was also an outcast, an outsider, a foreigner of mixed race. The Samaritans were descendants of the intermarriage of the remaining Jews of the Northern Kingdom and those whom the king of Assyria placed there after the exile of the Northern Kingdom. So, they were hated by the Jews because they were half-breeds, and also, their religion remained corrupted from the years of false worship before the exile. Therefore, this man would have no priest in which to show that he was cured of leprosy.

However, seeing that he was healed he returned to the man who was on His way to Jerusalem to win a cure for the leprosy of sin for the whole world. He returned to the Lord + Jesus—to the One, True High Priest, Who can heal all our sins and diseases. He returned to the One, True Priest, Who could heal him of his sin; the One Who just cured of his disease. He returned to the Lord + Jesus.

But now, he no longer “stands afar off.” He comes and kneels before the Lord and buries his face in our Lord’s feet in order to give Him thanks. There is now no longer a separation between this former leper and the Lord of All Creation. What causes this change? Faith! This man’s heart is changed by the working of the Holy Ghost, to see the healing of his flesh, and understand that the Lord + Jesus is the One Who can heal his soul of its sin. Now, with faith in His heart, he no longer has to “stand afar off.” He can come and bow down before the Lord. He can now receive the gifts that come with faith: healing from his sin. And that is exactly what our Lord + Jesus does for this man. He forgives his sins. For, what does our Lord say? He says, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”

What can this mean but that our Lord is forgiving him of his sin? The other nine were healed, too, but no mention is made of their faith. This shows our Lord’s grace and mercy for all of His creation. For, He causes the sun to shine on both the wicked and the good. He heals unbelievers of their diseases, just as He does those who believe on Him. But when we have faith in our Lord + Jesus, we gain an even more special healing—the healing of our soul from sin. Our faith justifies us, that is, it makes us right with God. Just like this Samaritan, we can now approach our Lord and Savior, kneel before Him and receive His gift of forgiveness.

That is why when congregations come to the altar to receive the Lord’s Body and Blood—to receive the Eucharist, which is a meal of thanksgiving on our part for the forgiveness that our Lord won for us by His offering of His Body and Blood on the tree of the holy cross—congregations kneel, just like this Samaritan did. For the recognition of our sins, that we are indeed, poor, miserable sinners, drives us to the feet of our Lord + Jesus. It drives us to bury our face at the feet of our Lord + Jesus and ask Him to heal our souls; to cleanse our hearts of sin and make us clean and whole. This is what

our faith in our Lord does. It makes us see clearly our lost condition, and drives us to the One Source where healing of our sin can be found. It drives us to our Lord + Jesus. It drives us to our High Priest; to the One Who offered Himself up on the tree of the holy cross for our sins, and the sins of the whole world.

Therefore, let us come and kneel before the Lord at this altar and receive His Body and Blood, which was shed for our forgiveness, and receive forgiveness from Him. For our faith drives us to this altar to receive the gifts of our Lord. And when we come to Him in faith, He gives us freely of that which we desire. He gives us forgiveness, so that we may indeed "depart in peace." We can depart in peace from this altar because our Lord + Jesus has healed us of the leprosy of sin, and made us right with Him and our heavenly Father. In other words, we can depart in peace, because having received forgiveness into our very mouths, we are now at peace with God. The kind of peace which passes all understanding, and can only come from the Lord + Jesus Christ, and His work of redeeming us from the power of sin.

Our Lord + Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem to suffer and die for us on the holy cross. Let us meet Him there with our spiritual diseases and sin. For He will heal you at this altar on account of the faith bestowed upon you through the continuous work of the Holy Ghost. Our Lord + Jesus Christ has conquered the power of sin, death and devil for you by His death on the cross. Let us raise our voices in loud song, and give Him thanks for all He has done. And let us give Him thanks for healing our hearts of sin, and giving us faith to believe on Him, and receive His great gift of forgiveness. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.