

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 17:11-19
September 18th, 2022
St. Bartholomew Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Fort Myers, FL
All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Pawleys Island, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

As He Went to Jerusalem

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Lord God heavenly Father, Who by Thy Son Jesus Christ hast delivered us through Thy Word and Holy Baptism from the dread leprosy of sin, and art pleased daily to manifest Thy gracious help in our every need, we beseech Thee, awaken our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit, that we may never be unmindful of Thy benefits, but ever live in Thy fear and perfect trust in Thy mercy, and with a joyous heart thank and praise Thee; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

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

“Your faith has made you well.” For some reason, this phrase gives Lutherans great consternation, for there are many church bodies that would distort these words’ true meaning. When these false teachers read, *“Your faith has made you well”* they immediately imagine that this former leper’s faith did something special. In other words, they have made this former leper’s faith a work. But as we learn from the Article IV on Justification in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession: faith justifies, but not because it is a work that someone must do, but rather because it clings to the promise of Christ.

Faith justifies because it clings to the promise of Christ crucified. In the pericope for today, what is the promise? The promise and gift of our Lord is that this leper, and the other nine with him, would be healed of their leprosy. The promise of healing is bestowed upon these lepers when our Lord says, *“Go show yourselves to the priests.”* To an untrained eye, it might appear that our Lord is passing the problem off, as if He was saying, “I do not want to deal with it, *go show yourselves to the priests.*” But quite the opposite is happening here, for when our Lord + Jesus tells these lepers to go show themselves to the priests He is pretty much telling them that they are as good as healed.

Lepers were not supposed to be around other people, they were not even supposed to be together, they were to separate themselves from all other contact, so that they could not pass on the contagion of leprosy. So, for them to go to the priests covered in leprosy would be forbidden. The only reason a leper was allowed to see a priest was to show the priest that he had indeed been cured of his leprosy. This was done so that a leper might publicly be shown to be cured of his leprosy, and so that any who might doubt this, would be given evidence that there was no chance they would defile themselves by associating with the former leper. In short, the former leper, would be welcomed back into the synagogue and worship life of the Jewish faith.

Therefore, when these lepers are told to go show themselves to the priests, they knew exactly what that meant—they would be healed, for they would not have been allowed to be shown to the priest

otherwise.

So then, we can see that these lepers, especially the one who returned to our Lord, were not healed because somehow, they obtained enough faith, or their faith was greater than other people's faith, or by some miracle their faith was able to drive back the disease of leprosy. No, this former leper, and the other nine, are saved and healed, because they clung to the promise of our Lord + Jesus Christ. This is plain to us, for what did they do when our Lord said, "*Go show yourselves to the priests.*" Did they mock our Lord and say, "What good is that going to do us?" Did they go away dejected? Did they head off in the opposite direction of the priests? No! They did what our Lord asked them to do; they went on their way to show themselves to the priests. They headed off in the same direction that our Lord was already heading; they headed toward to Jerusalem to see the priest. In other words, they believed the words of our Lord; they believed that they would be healed somehow, if they went to Jerusalem to show themselves to the priests.

But it was not their doing that did this; rather it was the promise and Word of our Lord to which they clung to in faith. They simply believed the promise and it was so. The same is true of us, for we are filled with the leprous disease of sin. We receive the free remission of our sins, on account of our faith in the promise that our Lord will indeed forgive us our sins. Our sins are not forgiven, because somehow, we have obtained the right amount of faith, or because our faith was strong enough to drive off sin, death and the devil. No! Our sins are forgiven simply because we believe that when the called minister of Christ—speaking in the place of and on the behalf of our Lord + Jesus Christ—tells us that our sins are forgiven, our sins are indeed forgiven for the sake of what our Lord Jesus has done. In other words, when we cling to the promise of the forgiveness of sins that Christ won for us, they are forgiven us.

We are not forgiven because the minister is especially charming or good-looking, or because he is more talented than other ministers, or because he is more loving, more knowledgeable, better dressed, or more filled with the Holy Ghost. In reality it has nothing at all to do with the priest to whom we have to show and lay bare all our iniquity and sins, but we are forgiven by the words of our Lord; because He declares to us that we are forgiven of the leprous disease of sins when the minister speaks on His behalf. We obtain that forgiveness by believing that what our Lord says is true; for His Word is true.

And this saving faith we obtain is also a gift, for through the pure preaching of the Word and the right administration of the blessed Sacraments, the Holy Ghost creates and sustains faith and life in all those who would hear and believe. The minister is simply there to serve our Lord, by serving us with these heavenly gifts. This is the task that he is called to do, and this is why his task requires faithfulness, so that we might receive this faith, and understand fully that it is not something that we are doing, but the work is solely our Lord's.

Therefore, let us like the former leper, who was a Samaritan, come and fall down on our faces in reverent worship of our Lord + Jesus Christ, for He has redeemed us with His perfect obedience to the Law of God, and by His innocent suffering and death on the holy cross. He has, by His taking upon Himself the disease of our leprous sin and by His cleansing death on the holy cross, removed from us all the stain and disease of sin that tormented our sinful flesh. And because He has removed the leprosy of sin and death that caused us to be outcasts of His kingdom, we can boldly come before our Lord, and fall on our faces, bending the knee of our hearts and bodies, and give thanks to our Lord for forgiving us all our sins.

This why we kneel to receive the Lord's Supper. When we kneel before this altar, we are taking upon ourselves the same posture that this Samaritan leper took when he came before our Lord to give Him thanks for healing him. We too, by our reception of our Lord's Body and Blood in bread and wine, are offering our thanks to Him for His forgiveness of His sins. This is what it means to "*do this in*

remembrance of Me"; it means to remember the promise that our Lord made to His disciples on the night of His betrayal, that He would offer us forgiveness of sins, through His Body and Blood given in bread and wine. When we remember that this bread and this wine are indeed the real and substantial Body and Blood of our Lord, and that in eating and drinking these Hosts we receive forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. When eat this meal we are clinging to the promise of Lord, and thereby our faith, given to us by the Holy Ghost, makes us well by cleansing us of all our sin.

"Your faith has made you well." But it is not your work, but it is Word of God; His promises, especially the promise of forgiveness, that we cling to and lay hold of that make us well. It is entirely a work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, since our Lord has so graciously forgiven us, do not take that gift away from Him, and claim it as something that you did by claiming that somehow your faith was great enough to break the bonds of sin and death, for this is impossible. Rather, rejoice that our Lord has bestowed the promise of forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation upon you by His holy Word and blessed Sacraments, and come to this holy Altar, kneel before your Lord, and give Him thanks for His great promises. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with the Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!