

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity  
St. Luke 17:11-19: "How Full Is Your Glass?"  
September 2/3, 2018 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

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Blessed are You, Lord Jesus. You atoned for all my sin with Your holy and precious blood! You are greatly to be praised for the saving Word of the Gospel, for the cleansing water of Baptism, and for the healing food of the Holy Supper! You are greatly to be praised for the grace of the Spirit who kindled in my soul the spark of faith and created a new, holy life within. Guard my faith, and increase it, and let nothing lead me away from You, the only One in my soul in time and eternity. Amen. (Laache, *Book of Family Prayer*, p. 553)

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)*

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*The sermon text for today is taken from the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:*

On the way to Jerusalem [Jesus] 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." / When He saw them He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. / 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." (ESV)

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*These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Jn. 17:17)*

In Christ Jesus, whose comfort renders sweet ev'ry bitter cup we meet (ELH #293, v. 4), dear fellow redeemed:

He remembered the day when he first noticed the spot on his leg. It didn't hurt when he touched it. He felt fine. Maybe it was just a little irritation or rash from something he ate or rubbed against. He tried to tell himself it was nothing to worry about, but it stayed on his mind. He started checking it every day and multiple times during the day. The light patch on his skin was expanding. The hairs inside the patch turned white. The thought of what this might be made him sick. He went to the priest. The priest looked at his leg and uttered the diagnosis he was dreading, "You have leprosy. You are unclean."

The man knew what came next. The LORD had spelled it out clearly to Moses and Aaron many years before: "*The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.'* He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp" (Lev. 13:45-46). His home would not be his home anymore. He must leave his family. Very likely, he would never again hug them or share the joys and sorrows of life with them. His

living quarters would be outside the city with others who had this disease, with others who were miserable like him. He was crushed beyond words.

## I

None of us has been in a situation quite like this. But we have known sorrows and troubles for which there seemed to be no remedy. You or someone you love may have been diagnosed with a serious disease or injury, and no cure for it is available. A relationship may have soured, and you don't know how to fix it. You are stuck in debt and don't know how to get out. It is times like these that our glass looks half empty. You might even be suffering to such an extent that a half empty glass sounds like a great scenario. You feel so far in the depths; you are down to the dregs. So it was for the leprous man and others in his community.

But then the lepers heard whispers, whispers of hope. It was said that a man named Jesus had the power to heal. Who He was, no one knew for sure. The rumors could hardly be true. But if they were, if Jesus could do this, maybe He would heal them. Wherever Jesus went, a crowd followed Him. Ten lepers saw this crowd and were able to find out who the people were gathered around. From a distance, these men cried out with one voice, "*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!*" Many people in the crowd probably didn't notice, but Jesus heard them. They were about to find out if the rumors about Jesus' power were true.

Jesus looked their way and said, "*Go and show yourselves to the priests.*" But why should they do that? The only reason they might go to the priest is if their leprosy had disappeared. This was not the case; their skin was still covered in it. It would have been easy for them to ignore Jesus and say, "I guess the rumors weren't true. He couldn't help us after all." But they followed His direction; they trusted His word. This was a great test of their faith.

It is likewise a test of our faith when God promises to work all things for good (Rom. 8:28). What good can come of an injured back? What good can come of cancer? What good can come of a broken relationship? What good can come of money problems? What good can come of an addiction? It is easy to doubt that God can help. This is just what the devil wants. The devil wants us to doubt God's promises. He wants us to be angry at God and at the people who hurt us. He wants us to grow bitter and to despair. He wants us to focus so much on our troubles here, that we no longer look forward with hope.

But the Lord is merciful to us. When Jesus sent the lepers on their way, He cleansed them. Those who used to call out, "*Unclean! Unclean!*" now cried with joy, "*I'm clean! I'm clean!*" Their faith in Jesus' word was rewarded. Faith in Jesus is always rewarded, but not always in this way. Not all of our hurts are healed, not all of our problems are fixed simply because we trust in the Lord. God never promised this.

If we lived in a perfect world, we would experience no trouble. But the world is infected by sin and so is our body. Sin is the leprosy that afflicts all people. Some people show their sin a bit more on the outside, but all are the same on the inside. This is why the sinless One had to come. His blood held the cure for our disease. His body and blood were untainted by sin. He was holy. He offered up His holy life on behalf of sinners in fulfillment of God's law, and He poured out His holy blood to counteract the effects of sin. "*[T]he blood of Jesus [God's] Son cleanses us from all sin*" (1Jn. 1:7).

Jesus shed His blood for all people. He invites all to believe in Him, just as the hymn says, "Come in poverty and meanness, / Come defiled, without, within; / From infection and uncleanness, / From the leprosy of sin, / Wash your robes and make them white; / Ye shall walk with God in light" (ELH #412, v. 2). Notice in today's text that Jesus healed both Jewish and Gentile lepers. He made no distinction between them. His merciful goodness was the same for all.

## II

We gather that nine of the leprous men were Jews, while one was a Samaritan Gentile. When they realized they were healed, only the Samaritan turned back, "*praising God with a loud voice.*" The one who had the least training in the Scriptures is the one who recognized what a gift he had received. We are often like the nine who did not return to give thanks. We can get so used to the gifts we receive from God, that we hardly notice them.

But where else do we find the full and free forgiveness of all our sins? Where else do we hear about God's love and care for us in every area of our lives? Where else can we be covered in the righteousness of God and receive the body and blood of Jesus on our tongues? If these amazing gifts do not move us to give thanks to God, what could? And there are so many other gifts besides. The good Lord also provides for us everything that we need for this body and life.

Now imagine you have two empty glasses in front of you. One glass is for the difficulties in your life, and the other is for your blessings. On small pieces of paper, first write down your troubles, one at a time. This glass is for the guilt you feel, for your sadness, your aches and pains, your anxiety and stress, your loneliness, your depression, your doubts, your fears, your difficulties at home and at work. This would take some time – there is much that troubles us.

The other glass is for your blessings. These might be harder to think of initially, but they will come. You write down what you are thankful for: your parents, your grandparents, your siblings, your spouse, your children, a home to live in, food to eat, clothes to wear, a car, good friends, a good church, good health, air to breathe, pets to keep you company, beautiful trees and flowers, music, the warmth of the sun, rain and snow to water the ground, a free country, angels to guard you, the Law to teach you, the Gospel to cheer you, and heaven for eternity.

Which of these two glasses is fuller? Many days, it seems that the glass of our troubles is overflowing while the glass of our blessings is empty. But that is only how it seems. It seems this way because we are weak by nature. We do not wish to take up our cross and follow after Jesus. We think that other people deserve to suffer like this, but not us. This is sinful. It is prideful to think that we deserve anything good.

But what we do not deserve, God freely gives us. He is as He told Moses, "*a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness*" (Ex. 34:6). Our sinful mind tricks us to think the glass of our troubles is full. It isn't; it's empty. Jesus emptied it. He took all our guilt and pain and trouble upon Himself, and when He rose again from the tomb, all of that stayed buried.

Because of His life and death in your place, the cup of your blessings overflows. How can one who stands in God's favor be without hope? How can one adopted by the mighty God go thirsty? Our journey through this fallen world is not easy; it is not without its great trials. But we go forward with the Lord's clear Word in our ear. We go forward with the nourishment of His holy body and blood. Through His Word and Sacraments, the leprosy of our sin does not spread uncontrollably. It does not lead to a lonely and troubled death.

Our Lord's Gospel of grace strengthens and keeps us in the saving faith. His promises fill our hearts with peace and with thankfulness for all the mercies He has shown us. Therefore, like the Samaritan, we go on our way rejoicing and praising God from whom all blessings flow.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

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