

THANKSGIVING SERMON 2020

TEXT: LUKE 17:11-19

THEME: HOPE, MERCY, AND THANKS

11 On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. **12** And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance **13** and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." **14** When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. **15** Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; **16** and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. **17** Then Jesus answered, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? **18** Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" **19** And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

In the name of Jesus:

When someone is confused or afraid, feeling that things in their life are out of control, or when they feel hopeless to overcome the problems that face them, that person might resort to wishful thinking. That person will think, or believe something to be true, without having any evidence upon which to base their belief or thought. It is tantamount to a pie in the sky faith, believing that one day, as if by magic, their circumstance will change. Some may even try to escape the reality of their situation, thinking back to a time in the past, longing and wishing for the good old days. It doesn't even matter that the good old days were not so good, they just want to escape their present situation. An example would be the Jewish nation and how they reacted right after Moses led them out of Egypt in the Exodus. When confronted with the reality of

their situation, that they were about to go forward into a wilderness, a desert really, with no food or water in sight, some complained about their situation and wanted to go back into Egypt, to become captives again. The harkened for the good old days.

You and I harken for the good old days when waves of nostalgia sets in. With illness on the rise, we long to go back to the good old days of when we didn't have to wear masks, practice social distancing, when we could go out to eat inside a restaurant, or go to a movie or a ball game without the fear of getting sick.

Luke records a time when ten lepers cried out to Jesus for help. They wanted to go back to the good old days, and their story serves to teach us about thankfulness on this Thanksgiving 2020. There is a lesson for us to learn today, a lesson about HOPE, MERCY, AND THANKSGIVING.

HOPE. Hope isn't an identification of an object or thing. Hope is an action. In terms of English grammar, hope is a verb. It denotes something being done. The ten lepers had hope. Oh, there were times when they probably engaged in wishful thinking, wondering what it would be like if they had a cure for leprosy, which they didn't. They might have looked back to the good old days, the days when they were healthy. But the reality of their situation is that they were lepers, unclean, social outcasts, with no hope of

health or a cure on the horizon. They were destined to be lepers unless there would be some type of Godly intervention.

They had heard about Jesus. They had heard the stories, Jesus turning water into wine, Jesus going into villages and healing the sick. Dead were brought back to life. Thousands fed with a couple loaves of bread and a few sardines. They had heard that Jesus was the One promised by Isaiah that, when the Messiah comes: “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.” By golly, that was what was happening. Jesus healed others, the lepers thought, maybe He will heal me.

They couldn't approach Jesus. Leprosy was so contagious that people had to practice social distancing, so they cried out from a distance: “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” Their only Hope was based on the reality of who Jesus was and what He had already done. So they cried out, they asked for help. They pleaded for mercy.

Mercy not because of who they were, they were nobodies. Mercy not because of what they could do, they were outcasts. Mercy not because of what they could give, they had nothing. Mercy in that they only and solely relied on Jesus, who He was, and what He could do. So they placed their faith in Jesus.

Once again they took action. That is what faith is, placing your life in Jesus' hands.

They were cleansed, but not before they went to the priest. You see, Jesus instructed them to go show themselves to the priest, because the Law required that in order to be declared cleansed from this hideous disease, the priest would be the one who would make that determination and declaration. And so they went, all ten of them, and while on their way they were cleansed.

Now Luke records that as this happened, only one returned to Jesus. All ten had hope to be healed, all ten pleaded for mercy, all ten were healed. But one, and only one, returned to give Jesus thanks.

Hope. Mercy. Thanksgiving. Dear brother and sister in Christ, you have heard the Good News of Jesus Christ. You are baptized, a child of God, a member of His Kingdom. You know and believe in the hope of Christ. You have repeatedly in your life petitioned the King to hear and grant your requests. Prayers for your ailing parents. Prayers for your children. Prayers for your own forgiveness. Prayers for whatever you have needed.

You have begged and prayed to the Lord for mercy. And He has been merciful to you. He has blessed you beyond measure, with clothing and shoes, house and home, spouse, family, work, and pleasure. He has given all this to you and more. Not because you deserve it. You have it because God is

merciful and gracious to you. He has been merciful to you in giving you physical blessings, and He continues to be merciful and gracious to you with all types of spiritual blessings. For Christ has purchased and has won you from sin, Satan, and death, not because of your works, but because of His mercy. Each and every time you worship here you taste and see the mercy and love of Christ, for He calls you by the Gospel, He feeds you in the Sacrament.

God in love sent His Son to live, die, and rise again for you. Christ is your Hope and He gives you Hope. He has done all of this for you. He is always merciful to you, hearing your requests, forgiving you your sins, being your ever present Help in times of trouble.

God gives Hope and Mercy, for He is our Hope and He is Merciful. And how shall we respond? Do we act like the Hebrews of old who, when freed from their captivity in Egypt, bitterly complain to God about what they didn't have? Do we react and respond as the nine other lepers did who pleaded with Jesus for mercy, then receiving His mercy and healing go our own way to live our lives without another thought of Christ? Or will our response be that of the leper whose hope was in Christ, who pleaded for mercy, and then returned to thank the Lord? I think you know the answer. It is why we celebrate Thanksgiving. For we have indeed tasted and have seen that the

Lord is good. It is our duty to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him. So give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endures forever.

Amen