

Sermon Notes

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity

9 September 2012, Anno Domini, as preached for this Sunday in 2011

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

The Collect.

ALmighty and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain that which thou dost promise, make us to love that which thou dost command; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



AND it came to pass, as Jesus went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, **Go shew yourselves unto the priests.** And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, **Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.** And he said unto him, **Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.** (Luke 17:11-19)

Among very many other blessed truths in today's text is one stark truth that stands out like the Sun at noontide on a clear day: that truth is the importance of GRATITUDE!

What is gratitude then? Gratitude is the direct and natural result of Grace! The composition of the Universe that God has made is a splendid and perfect example of a closed system (Space-Time Continuum) in which every object of its composition

conforms to the perfect laws of nature and of nature's God. The Sun, Moon, and Stars, obey the natural laws of inter-gravitational pull and balance which forces them to remain in their respective orbits or trajectories. We see the same laws respected in the plant kingdom. An apple seed will always produce an apple tree and never a peach. The animal kingdom as well adheres strictly to the laws laid down by God in their propagation. Sheep will always, as God commanded, reproduce after their own kind. This signals a great reciprocity in the natural creation; however, man is an exception to the general laws of behavior among men and his interaction with all other aspects of Creation. Man, unlike other creatures of the animal or vegetable world, has will and reason. God has deemed this essential if man can possess the gift of love for love must be a result of will. So, we will observe in today's sermon text that gratitude is a function of will and, ultimately, of love itself.

AND it came to pass, as Jesus went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. I love the casual manner in which God introduces a great event as if it is simply a thing that happens by chance along the way; but it is not! The usual route of Jewish travelers was to avoid passing through Galilee and, especially, Samaria (due to the ill-winded assumption that these people were 'less clean' than the Jews). Jesus did nothing by *accidental* incident. He was well aware that ten men awaited His coming at a *certain village*. It is unlikely that the men themselves knew of a surety of the *arranged* meeting, but Christ knew that He would perform a great act of healing at this place.

And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Now, we will all understand, I am sure, that leprosy was no disease lightly to be taken. It was a slow and cruel killer. The flesh of its victims literally rotted on the body causing limbs, ears, and even noses to be eaten away. Theodor was putrid and unbearable. Slowly, by increasing miseries, it brought its victims to the long home (grave). There was no cure for the disease in the arsenal of man's medical knowledge and resources. The disease could not be hidden from others due to the emitted odor and the marred features of its victims. They were shunned from the public and cast out into colonies apart. If a non-leper approached, they must shout "Unclean, Unclean!" And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be. (Lev 13:45-46)

What a horrible existence was this! It is, in a great many points, exactly like sin. It is putrid, disfigures our persons, alienates us from the family of God, and, in the end, it murders its owner.

There are volumes of books written about *effective* prayer, but if you would like to know a good and simple prayer that brings results, observe the prayer of the lepers: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." How did these men know that Jesus was among the approaching throng? We are not told, but they must not have ever seen His face before, and even now they stand afar off. I believe that they may have heard a rumor of His coming and that rumor, combined with an insight from on high, gave them a conviction of Him. To them, He was Jesus, Master! You will observe that they asked for no specific healing or grant of favor only MERCY! This, too, is the perfect prayer of the sinner. Nothing else will profit the sinner ere MERCY is granted him. Of what is MERCY made? The answer, of course, is all of GRACE. Mercy comes not as an entitlement, but

as a free grant of goodness (Grace).

And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. Immediately upon sighting the need, Jesus provides the cure. Of course, the Kingdom of Heaven requires reciprocity of faith in its provisions of Grace. I am amazed at the simple faith of these ten lepers in responding to the counsel of Christ to **Go and shew yourselves unto the priests.** To what end? They knew, as surely as all in the party of Christ, that the leper must be pronounced clean by the priest in order of re-admittance to society. These men, not yet being noticeably healed, immediately began their journey to the priest in OBEDIENCE to Christ. Our faith requires us to be obedient to God, not to our own desires and reason. Once these lepers embarked, the healing began. Just as Naaman was wholly healed on the seventh dip into Jordan waters, so were these lepers when they responded to the Lord in FAITH. **And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.** *and it came to pass* How common in tone, but exceptional in result! It was not their walking that resulted in healing, but their faith and response in Christ.

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. The actions of this poor leper could cause a mighty warrior to weep with humility. This leper believed God. This leper obeyed God. This leper was healed by God, and he KNEW it! No longer was his first priority to go to the Priest and be pronounced clean! His very first priority was to run to that One who had made him clean. He turned back from his own purposes and objectives to those of God. With a louder voice than that used in begging for mercy, he glorified God. He fell on his face at the feet of the Beloved Son of God and gave thanks. Have you ever felt so miserably dirty from sin and pleaded the mercy of God, and then been granted cleansing and forgiveness? There are certainly sins in everyman's life at some point which should compel him to the pleading.

The other nine lepers got what they desired healing of body, but only one came back to return praise and thanks to the Healer. The Author, noticeably and with purpose, informs us that this one leper who returned to give thanks was one of those hated Samaritans. Why are we so frankly told this? What does it add to our understanding? It informs us that none are beneath the merciful favor of God to heal and forgive. It is often the one who stands in the lowest esteem of man that may rise to the greatest regard of heaven. **And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?** Where are the other 90% who have received the grace and mercy of God besides this 10% who have returned to give thanks? Does this not speak to the great body of ingrates who occupy the pews of America's churches every Sunday? One is kneeling at the feet of Christ, the other nine have separated themselves from Christ once their desire is granted. What a shame and a testimony to ingratitude! **There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.** Quite often it is the stranger that becomes a more worthy child of God than those who have been received into the family of God from their youth.

There is grave counsel in the final words of our Lord to the Samaritan stranger, but also to us: **And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.** Do you grasp the significance of this last clause? **Thy faith hath made thee whole.** The faith and gratitude of this one leper has made him not only well of leprosy, but whole in every other way! To be wholly well is to be cured of the greatest disease, and that disease is not even the deadly sin of leprosy it is the deadliest of diseases from which no man can recover except by the grace of God! That disease is SIN!

Please observe the difference between the one leper who was made whole in every whit, and the nine who were only cured of the immediate and most apparent malady. The difference was the GRATITUDE expressed by the one who returned to praise God and return thanks. How often do we pray for a cherished blessing and, when it is granted by God, we go our way into the world without returning on bended knee to give thanks for the grant? All that God gives is a result of GRACE. All that He expects in return is GRATITUDE!

In the natural Creation, we observe that all material bodies conform to the physical laws put into place by God at the instant of Creation. Gravity is in effect twenty four hours per day. Darkness will always immediately flee from the presence of light. Sound will always travel through the medium of space via wave lengths. Electrical current will always require a return in order for electrons to move from a positive to a negative pole. If the ground return is interdicted, the current ceases to flow. This is just like Grace. God freely grants grace to those of us who can never merit it, but God will not blindly grant grace to those who are unwilling to express gratitude for it. Gratitude is a function of Grace. If the return line (Gratitude) is interdicted, the current (Grace) will cease to flow.

I will relate here an explanation of Grace I found in my father's papers whom he credits to an E. Williams:

Gratitude is a temper of mind which denotes a desire of acknowledging the receipt of a benefit. The mind which does not so feel is not as it ought to be. When the apostle Paul says of the heathen, "Neither were they thankful," he seems to stamp the sin of ingratitude as peculiarly odious. But, like every other grace which is required of us, virtuous gratitude depends, in part, on right views. A right view of benefits received, of the source from whence they flow, and of our own demerit, has a direct tendency to excite gratitude; and while the mind is influenced by sovereign grace, this will be the pleasing effect. The devout Christian surveys the sovereign benevolence of the Creator in every person, in every object, in every quality, and in every event. Sovereign benevolence forces itself on every sense, and pervades his grateful heart. And then, when he extends his views to a future state, and contemplates the operations of grace sovereign, distinguishing, efficacious grace he is melted into reverential awe and grateful praise, and exclaims, "Why me, Lord!" "Glory, everlasting glory to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb of God that was slain, who hath redeemed us to God by His blood, and hath given us the earnest of His own inheritance.

We have this from the good John Flavel concerning the opposite side of the coin - Grace: There is many a learned head in hell. Gifts are the gold that beautifies the Temple; but grace is as the Temple which sanctifies the gold. One tear, one groan, one breathing of an upright heart is more than the tongues of angels.

If we would pray for grace, we must express gratitude after its giving. Do we?