

Sermon Ascension Lutheran Church

Brandon, England, UK

13/10/2013

Proper 23 Gospel Text – Luke 17:11-19

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto from God, our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Dear Christian Friends,

Have you ever been so sick that you could not be allowed out of bed? So sick that you were literally forced to stay put, for fear of getting someone else sick? Have you ever misbehaved that order to stay in bed, to remain quarantined? When I was a younger lad, I know I was one to always get out of my room when I was sick. I was a kid who never minded sharing my germs with those around me. I tended to make my mom or dad sick depending on who was watching me during the time.

Well in this reading from the Gospel of Saint Luke, we find ten such men. They were lepers, they were quarantined. Lepers were extremely contagious, so most towns created a camp outside the walls for them to live. They weren't even allowed to come to the temple and pray! This is where we see how good and gracious our Savior Jesus really is. In this act of mercy, grace, and healing, we can learn something about ourselves as well. It is one that is well worth this morning's self-reflection. I want you to reflect along with me on the words that Jesus speaks to the Samaritan leper,

“YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WELL.”

These words yes were spoken to the Samaritan leper, but at our baptism, Jesus says these same words to us. While you ponder that statement, YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WELL, think about these three questions. 1) What were we sick with? 2) What do we have faith in? 3) Now that we are well, what are we to do?

I.

Let's tackle these questions one at a time. What were we sick with? We will first take a look at the men in the reading for today. Let's look at the lepers. As I already said lepers were in an extremely tight spot. Leprosy was not something anyone wanted to have. It was and still is a very nasty disease that eats away flesh and inflicts extreme pain. On top of that, the Jews saw the person with leprosy as unclean. This meant they could not even go to the temple to pray. Now I don't know about you, none of this sounds very fun to me. This is why we find them where we do in this reading, they were somewhere outside a village between Samaria and Galilee. They were outsiders, they were unclean, and no one wanted them around. That is why when they see Jesus, they cried out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

We were and are in a very similar situation. We might not have a visible sickness such as leprosy, but we have something much worse that infects each and every one of us. That is sin. We can sit here and blame Adam and Eve for that predicament, but in actuality, we would have done the same thing they did, eating the forbidden fruit. With that fall, we all caught the bug, we all were made sick by sin.

The symptoms of sin show up everywhere in our daily lives. Our sinful nature makes us want to believe that God does not exist. That God plays no part in our lives. In that our sinful nature attempts to snuff out the light given us at our baptism. It wants to destroy the faith created in our hearts at the hearing of His word. The worst part of it all? Sin tries to make us think that it is not really a sickness! It wants to set up shop and become the norm! A sin that becomes a habit will no longer be considered a sin but the norm. That is what our sinful nature wants us to believe. It wants us to forget that sins are sins, which are reprehensible to God. What does God say happens to those who sin? Paul says it this way, "The wages of sin is death." This death is a spiritual one. This is the death that leads to our condemnation.

This sin that we commit, we commit on a daily basis. This is an ongoing battle that we all face. Sin will attack us every time it can. We must be ready to admit failure when we sin, and go back to the promises that were made at our baptism. There we were made a child of God. He gave us his name, and He made us his own. Luther suggested in his Small Catechism to begin each morning with the sign of the cross and his Morning prayer in which we ask the Lord to keep us this day from sin, and every night he suggested to say his Evening prayer in which we ask that Lord forgive us all the sin and wrong we have done. It is a constant battle in this day again. Sin infects us daily, and we constantly need to have our medicine, which is found only in the merciful one Jesus Christ, who gives us exactly what we need, forgiveness.

We constantly need to be reminded of that fact that we have been baptized into the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The one who was promised by the Father to be our Savior. He is our only hope of coming out of this spiritual sickness alive. And you know what? God the Father promised to his people that He would send his Son to take on our infirmities, and Jesus did! He took on this sickness of sin and crucified them on the cross.

II.

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."⁷¹ What kind of faith did that man have? In what did that man put his trust? What do we put our faith in? We read earlier in the reading that all ten men were saying to Jesus, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.**" They were throwing themselves at the feet of the merciful**

¹ *Lutheran Service Book Three Year Lectionary* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009).

Lord. They could say because of their belief in the stories that they had heard about Jesus. They believed he could heal them, and so they commanded Jesus to have mercy on them. This was a cry for salvation; it is exactly what we say to God when we confess our sins. We ask Him to show us mercy. We are crying out for our salvation. We like the Samaritan have been given faith in Christ. We have heard the good word of the Lord, and it was sealed at our baptism. The Holy Spirit has worked faith into our hearts, and now we can say, "Lord have mercy on us."

The ten lepers were all cleansed of their leprosy, but they still needed to go to the temple. It's because they needed to have the priest rule them clean. This was so that they could be brought back into the Temple life. How are we really made well from this sickness of sin? It's only by Christ's own bitter suffering and death on the cross that makes us well. It is by the regimen of his body and blood that we receive in the sacrament of Holy Communion that we receive our medicine for our sin stricken body. We have faith in the words of Jesus when he says, "Take and Eat this is my body given for you. Take and drink this is my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." Through that we are made well, and our sins are forgiven and our faith strengthened.

III.

The final question we started this discussion with was this: Now that we are well, or know how to be made well, what are we to do? Jesus told the Samaritan, "Get up and go your way." This is what he tells us too! But what does this mean? It means this: to go in the way that has made us well. It means to go in faith. To go in joy and peace and knowledge that Jesus is the one who made us well, and He promises to continue to make us well throughout our days on this earth. That is why we eat his body and drink his blood most if not every Sunday. If we go in that knowledge that Christ has done all this for us, we will be emboldened to tell those around us about him and his mercy and love.

Having been made well, having been given the faith that gives us life in Jesus Christ, we will be going and doing the work of the Lord! That is what going in faith really means. We are called to be a blessing for our neighbor. I highly doubt that the man who came back to Jesus kept his mouth shut concerning who made him well. We won't be quiet either! The Holy Spirit will use us as he sees fit in the plan of salvation for others, whether that is talking to your coworker or teaching your child the love of Christ. You will be used. We are told that we won't even realize we are doing works that glorify God, but in those works of faith, God is glorified. That is what we are to do, walk in the faith that was given us by Word and Sacrament. Just as Jesus said, "Rise up and go your own way, your faith has made you well."

Conclusion

Now may the peace of God bless and preserve us all in the in the one true faith until life everlasting. Amen.

