

Home Service for 10/9/2022

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

*Are you stuck in the past? Have you lost hope for the future? Do not despair. Build houses of joy. Plant gardens of faith. Offer thanks and praise to the living God. All will be well.*

Call to Worship:

Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth! Come and see what God has done! God has turned our sea into dry land. We have passed through the river on foot. Bless our God, O peoples. Let the sound of God's praise be heard! When you tested and tried us, O God, you brought us out to a spacious place. You kept us among the living and prevented our feet from slipping. Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth! How awesome are the deeds of our God! Amen

Opening Prayer:

Master Gardener, you revive us when our bodies grow weak, and when our spirits faint within us. Though we may be bound by our worries, your word is not chained. Help us build houses of joy and plant gardens of faith. As we pray for the welfare of our communities, help us bloom where we are planted, that your harvest of hope and love may be bountiful. In gratitude for your blessings, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Patient Lord, you know how easy it is for us to whine and complain bitterly about all those things in our lives that are difficult. We focus on them as though they were the only things that ever happened to us, forgetting the many blessings that you have given to us and the opportunities you give us to serve you. We feel alienated--you call us beloved. We feel lost--you seek us. We feel broken and battered--your love is a healing balm. Forgive us when we forget those things. Help us to always look to you for our healing and to return thanks to you by praise and serving others in your name. For we offer this prayer of confession of our failures and gratitude for your blessings. AMEN.

Words of Assurance

*Turn again to the Lord, for you are beloved of God and have been given many blessings. Rejoice in God's love for you. AMEN.*

Read Psalm 66:1-12

Shout for joy to God, all the earth!

<sup>2</sup> Sing the glory of his name;  
make his praise glorious.

<sup>3</sup> Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!  
So great is your power  
that your enemies cringe before you.

<sup>4</sup> All the earth bows down to you;  
they sing praise to you,  
they sing the praises of your name."<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Come and see what God has done,  
his awesome deeds for mankind!

<sup>6</sup> He turned the sea into dry land,  
they passed through the waters on foot—  
come, let us rejoice in him.

<sup>7</sup> He rules forever by his power,  
his eyes watch the nations—  
let not the rebellious rise up against him.

<sup>8</sup> Praise our God, all peoples,  
let the sound of his praise be heard;

<sup>9</sup> he has preserved our lives  
and kept our feet from slipping.

<sup>10</sup> For you, God, tested us;  
you refined us like silver.

<sup>11</sup> You brought us into prison  
and laid burdens on our backs.

<sup>12</sup> You let people ride over our heads;  
we went through fire and water,  
but you brought us to a place of abundance.

Prayers of the People:

*Lord, we thank you for the wondrous ways in which you have healed and restored us. There have been countless times when we wondered if the trials and struggles*

*of our lives would overcome us and swallow us up; yet you have reached out to redeem us. Just as in the scriptures when Jesus healed the ten people afflicted with leprosy, one, when he saw that he had been healed, returned to Jesus, praising God for the healing that had taken place. Make our faith as strong as the one of that man. Give us the wisdom to know the source of healing is not in our pleading, but in our acknowledging your love and power. As we bring before you the names and situations in our hearts that are filled with strife and trouble, we ask for their healing as well. We know that you hear the cries of our hearts and respond always in love. Help us to place our complete trust in your never-ending compassion. For it is in Jesus' Name, we pray. AMEN*

## Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is The kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: Jeremiah 29: 1, 4-7

This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

<sup>4</sup>This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: <sup>5</sup>“Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. <sup>6</sup>Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. <sup>7</sup>Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

Read the Epistle Lesson: 2 Timothy 2:8-15

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, <sup>9</sup> for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

<sup>11</sup> Here is a trustworthy saying:

If we died with him,

we will also live with him;

<sup>12</sup> if we endure,

we will also reign with him.

If we disown him,

he will also disown us;

<sup>13</sup> if we are faithless,

he remains faithful,

for he cannot disown himself.

<sup>14</sup> Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. <sup>15</sup> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Luke 17:11-19

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup> As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy<sup>[a]</sup> met him. They stood at a distance <sup>13</sup> and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

<sup>14</sup> When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

<sup>15</sup> One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. <sup>16</sup> He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

<sup>17</sup> Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? <sup>18</sup> Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" <sup>19</sup> Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

Message

The story of Jesus' healing of the 10 lepers reminds us that one of the greatest expressions of faith is gratitude before God in Christ Jesus. I imagine that most of us had that childhood experience where every request was followed by the question, "What do you say?" And then, once we received whatever it was we were seeking, our parents would follow-up with, "Now, what do you say?" Of course, this was our training in saying "Please" and "Thank you." And if our parents were as successful as they probably wanted to be, the end result is that we now include "please" and "thank you" at all the appropriate times without even thinking about it. Yet, the problem with such rote practices is that the words can

sort of lose their meaning because there is no true thought behind them. It's almost as bad as if you just didn't even say "thank you" at all.

These healings happened on the way to Jerusalem, Luke continually reminds his readers that Jesus is on his way to his death. Yet, that awareness does not prevent him from being compassionate, from healing others, from teaching all he wants and needs to. These episodes provide examples for his followers as to how they are to behave on their own way to death.

As the Lord Jesus approached a village where ten seriously ill men came out to meet Him. Ten lepers met Jesus, ten men afflicted by the worst disease imaginable in Jesus' day. Leprosy was incurable, leprosy was disgusting, leprosy was revolting. Leprosy was considered proof that you were the vilest kind of sinner. God was really punishing you for something really bad. If you had leprosy, you actually watched your body rot away. Your fingers, your ears, your nose dropped off. You died a slow and painful death, cut off from society, cut off from family and the only friendships you had were others like you. Nine others in this case that kept reminding you as you looked at them how really bad you were. In such a state they were not particular whether someone was a Jew or Gentile. Even Samaritans were allowed entrance into this sorry society. Ten lepers, ten dying, decaying, stinking wretches met Jesus and cried, "Jesus Master Have mercy on Us." They must have known this was their only chance to escape the awful consequences of their disease. If Jesus did nothing for them, surely their lives would end in a slow painful death.

"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us " Can you imagine that air was filled with tension as the ten lepers, as ten lives hung on the words or actions of the Man of Galilee.

"Jesus, Master, Have Mercy on Us". He didn't touch them.

"Jesus Master, Have mercy on us". He didn't wash them.

"Jesus, Master have mercy on us." He didn't even pray for them.

Finally, finally after what seemed to be an eternity for these desperate men, Jesus spoke: "Go, show yourselves to the priests." In other words, Jesus was saying, go to the priests for certificates of cleansing. They weren't healthy, but they were to go and get a health certificate to proclaim they were healed. Jesus said, "Go get a physical examination."

All ten lepers had some level of faith. They all obeyed Jesus' word and all journeyed toward their given goal. Perhaps they were disappointed that Jesus or God did not answer their prayer then and there on the spot. Nonetheless, they all went off as told. On the way, something happened. They realized they were cured. They got what they asked for and wanted. We can presume, that they reached the priests and got their "clean" bill of health, then they could and did return to human society and live a "normal" life again. Yet, that is all they got and no more.

Ten suffering human beings had been touched by the Son of God. Ten suffering men had encountered the touch of a loving God. Ten suffering men had been touched by the creating hand of God that was still very much at work in His world. Can you picture them bounding down the road to the priest, now running, now leaping, now dancing, wondering how the priest would react... anticipating the glee, the excitement of their families as they would return home; healthy, alive, with a health certificate proclaiming to all what had happened. All ten men caught up in the joy, the excitement of the moment.

But one of them halts in his tracks. He stops, he smiles, he turns, now walking, now running, back to the Master, back to this man of Galilee, back to this one who touched him with this mysterious force. He comes back, "shouting, laughing, proclaiming glory to God with a joyful and thankful heart." He runs back to Jesus, falls at Jesus' feet and gives the Son of God thanks for the great healing that had been done. And who was this one cured leper, not Jew but a Samaritan.

Only one of the ten who were touched by the love of this man of Galilee had seen beyond the miracle of healing to the one who had dared to risk for him. He saw Jesus for who he was? One who cared, one who loved, one who wanted a relationship with everyone on the face of the earth.

He saw the Son of God as a man of love, a builder of relationships, he saw the miracle as Jesus' way of building a bridge between the fallen creation, the brokenness of disease and the loving hand of God who wants to reach into that brokenness with his creating and redeeming power, He saw Jesus.

Then notice Jesus response. "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?" Only one in ten came back to give thanks. Only one in ten. Why, Jesus is asking, why only one in ten?

By dwelling on the fact that only one in ten came back, Jesus is telling us very plainly he wanted the thanks. He wanted them to see beyond the miracle to the miracle worker. He wanted them to come into a relationship with him.

The ten lepers got it all. A new life, a clean bill of health, a return to family and friends. But only one could see the greatness, only one could see the magnitude of the gift, only one could see the blessing. We are all blessed by God in different ways, at different times with different blessings. Jesus is asking us to see beyond the gifts, beyond our own need of those things, to see the giver. To be humble and accept with a grateful heart what we have. And in that attitude a peace, a contentment about living will come. We will see our blessings, our talents, our resources coming from God and then an amazing thing will happen. God will continue to bless us.

When God blesses us there is a double blessings. The one leper was doubly blessed. His body was made whole, but he saw beyond the healing to the healer and became for the church a symbol of the church's outreach to the whole world. The healing of the ten lepers and the thankfulness of the one showed the world what the kingdom of God would be like. God would liberate us from "sin, death and the power of evil," and in that liberation we have a freedom to live, a sense of joy in our relationship with a loving God, and an adventuresome attitude about life that lets us dare to risk, that dares us to reach out because we know that God is with us, walking through life.

With God's blessings, and our willingness to surrender our selfishness and pride to live in His grace with a peace of contentment, life can truly be exciting, fulfilling and a creative adventure for everyone. How often do we pour our gratitude out to our waiting Father, who has so blessed us? Not often enough. God gives us all of Himself, even His very own Son, and often we never give Him even a word of thanks because we are too focused on ourselves and our problems. This story of the ten lepers reminds us that if our faith is genuine, we will never, ever cease thanking God for the many blessings of our lives! Amen!

Benediction:

*As you go forth this day, build houses of love and plant gardens of faith.  
May you sow seeds of faith and hope, and bloom where you are planted.  
Care for your neighbors, and bear fruit of kindness and compassion.  
May you grow in the power of God's Spirit, and bloom with the grace of Christ's love.*

*Go with God knowing you go with His presence, His love and His comfort for He walks beside you each and every day. Amen.*