

## **Luke 17:11-19**

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, 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 made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, 'Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?' Then he said to him, 'Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.'

### **Sermon**

So, as we prepare for Thanksgiving this year, I think we should take a moment to recognize that this will not be an easy year to be thankful. For indeed, we have a long and difficult road still ahead of us. Though we are beginning to hear good news about vaccines for this virus, we are not yet out of the woods.

But, neither were the Lepers that Jesus heals in the scripture we read today. They may have been clear of the physical pain of their disease, but Jesus sends them to the priests for a reason. You see, the process of re-integrating into society after suffering from Leprosy was quite a long and complicated one. They didn't get to just take a vaccine and be done with it.

- Jesus sends them to the priests because the priests would need to inspect them to make sure that they didn't still carry any wounds. Then, if they were seen to be clean, they would have to go through a week-long process of
  - Repentance for any sins they may have committed that might have caused their illness.
  - Sacrifices as a sign of penance
  - Ritual and physical baths to wash away whatever may remain of your leprosy
  - And even the shaving of all of your hair and the burning of all of your clothes
  - And you couldn't even go back into your house until this whole week-long process was over.

- And I imagine that 9 of those Lepers who were cured had seen people go through this before. And they probably knew just how difficult and frustrating these rituals that lay ahead of them would be. So, they put their heads down and marched off to show themselves to the priests, to begin the difficult process, and focus on trying to get through the struggle to come.

But, there was one Leper amongst those ten that was different. He wasn't from around there. He didn't fit in. He probably didn't follow the customs of that place and didn't know what he was about to be in for.

- And it was this healed Leper that chose to turn back. He was the only one amongst the 10 who gave thanks to Jesus. For without the distractions of all that worry over the struggle to come - he could see clearly and choose to give thanks, trusting that because of

the gift that Christ had given him, he could face whatever unknown struggle was on the way.

It reminds me of this song that I only really listened to for the first time this week. It's called "Coat of Many Colors" by an artist named Dolly Parton, that I have to admit, I never really took very seriously. That may have been for the way that she looks, or the way that she talks, or the clothes she wears. But, she made me reconsider her this week, when I learned of the generous donation she gave to Covid-19 research that looks like it might lead to a vaccine for this virus.

Anyway, she tells the story in this song of when she was young, growing up poor in the mountains of Tennessee. She says how she didn't have a winter coat that fit, and autumn was well underway.

- Then, someone gives her mother a box of rags. Different colors and shapes and fabrics that others had thrown away.
- And her mother isn't so focused on the future that she forgets about the past. She remembers the story of Joseph in the Bible, and the gift of his many colored coat. And she begins to sew those rags together, so her little girl can get through the winter once again.
- And Dolly loved that coat, just like Joseph had loved his. She was so grateful for the story her mother told and the love that she put into each stitch that she wore the coat to school the very next day.
- But, the kids at school didn't see that coat in the same way. For they still saw her as that poor little girl from up the hill. The one whose mother couldn't afford fashion and style and a new coat.
- And Dolly had a choice:
  - She could focus on the struggle that lay ahead. She could lament the fact that her coat was made of rags. She could choose to try and fit in with all those kids from school.
  - Or, she could choose to remember the stories of the scriptures and the love of her mother, and everything that had been done to help her get through that winter. And she could choose to Give Thanks, and rest assured, that because of all that grace she had received, her coat of many colors was worth more than all their clothes.

Because whether you're a little girl who's being teased at school, a Leper on the way to the temple, or someone just trying to make it through this crazy year: Gratitude is more than a feeling. It is actually a choice that we get to make every day.

- Will we dwell on the future and the struggle that lays in our road? Will we worry, quarrel, and lament?
- Or will we remember all that God has done for us in the past and choose to Give Thanks to the One who has brought us safe thus far?
- Will we choose to give thanks for all those who are making sacrifices to protect our health and our well-being?

- Will we choose to give thanks for the love of this church and this community that God has surrounded us with, that lift us up in prayer and compassion?
- Will we choose to put our grateful faith into the hands of the Christ whose healing power will surely carry us through whatever else is on the way.

Amen.

This sermon was first shared with Aurora First Presbyterian Church, by Rev. Doug Friesema. To receive future communications from the church, please contact:

[firstauroraoffice@gmail.com](mailto:firstauroraoffice@gmail.com)

(303) 364-2609

1585 Kingston St.

Aurora, CO 80010

[Aurorafpchurch.com](http://Aurorafpchurch.com)

[facebook.com/aurorafpchurch](https://facebook.com/aurorafpchurch)