

NORTH MAIN SERMON OCTOBER 12, 2025 THE 18<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

The Epistle reading **2 Timothy 2:8-15** (this is Paul's letter to Timothy)

<sup>8</sup> 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.

**Gospel Reading Luke 17:11-19**

<sup>11</sup> 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." THE WORD OF GOD..

This passage from 2 Timothy follows a very complex line of thinking that quickly loses most of us. But Paul's basic point is that he is willing to be imprisoned in order to do God's work, and this is attractive, especially to someone who is dedicated in everything they do like Paul was. For Paul, his wording to Timothy is that that they can chain Paul and put him in prison, but they cannot chain God's word. **In his Hardship Paul was being Faithful.** The apostle was nearing the end of his time of hardship. He

knew that his days on earth, imprisoned in chains, were numbered. Joyfully he testified of his continuing faithfulness. "In my hardship, I am faithful," Paul encouraged his son in the faith.

Paul was faithful because he remembered Jesus Christ. His Lord had endured hardships. Jesus had been put to death to advance God's kingdom. And then, Jesus had been raised from the dead. That resurrection hope kept Paul faithful in hardship even while imprisoned. Paul was faithful because God's Word could never be stopped. Though he was chained, the good news could never be chained. Knowing that he was about to leave this world of hardship, Paul encouraged his protégé, Timothy, by saying, "You be faithful." When we are faithful, we are also grateful.

**Gospel from Luke also reminds us to be faithful as well as grateful...**

This story of ten lepers is often told to us to remind us of the importance of saying "Thank you." As well as being faithful. But the story is not about manners. It is about an appreciative attitude toward life and the blessings and healings that we are given. This simple sounding story is also about Jesus' teaching about forgiveness. This story puts, front and center, the way of service that Jesus sets before his disciples, and so, before us. This simple sounding story follows on from Jesus' teaching about forgiveness. On first glance, it seems a little odd. Why put a miracle here? The section of Luke we're in mostly concentrates on Jesus' words and teaching, rather than Jesus' deeds. The teachings here have been directed at Jesus' disciples, but also at the Pharisees, with whom he's depicted as being in conflict. Jesus is teaching something revolutionary and world-changing, and they don't want to hear it or allow it to be heard. This story puts, front and center, the way of service that Jesus sets before his disciples, and so, before us. We're to serve no matter the circumstances we find ourselves in, regardless of our personal pain and anxieties, and whatever the cost. That is the way of service in Jesus' kingdom. The nature of this service is important, too. We don't serve simply because we must. We do it with a heart full of love, gratitude and with open hands, ready to receive what God offers us. Serving all who need, whenever we come across the need. No wonder the religious leaders found his teachings uncomfortable and revolutionary!

Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem. He will be betrayed, tortured, abandoned and murdered. He's going willingly, in the full knowledge of

what will happen to him. Yet, instead of being paralyzed by fear, despair or anger at the unfairness of it all, he continues to live out the way of service. Jesus keeps moving outside of the expectations of a Jewish man, which, of course, is one of the things that got him into such trouble with the Jewish authorities. Luke sets his story in the space between Galilee and Samaria, and includes a Samaritan leper among the number Jesus healed. Jesus meets ten lepers, nine Jews and one Samaritan, on the border between Galilee and Samaria. They were outcasts and were not allowed to approach non leprosy people. They were required to stand at a distance (the distance was even greater if they were downwind).

When they saw Jesus, they cried out for help. The lepers beg Jesus to heal them, while respecting his integrity - they don't want to contaminate him by coming into contact with him (touching a leper would render Jesus ritually impure, too). These lepers were bound together by being outsiders, unclean and excluded by their communities. They had a skin disease which rendered them ritually unclean, unable to participate in society. Jesus does not ignore them. He immediately sent them to the priest who could give them a certificate of cleansing. This would permit them to return to their normal lives. Jesus sends them to be reconciled with their community - their trust in Jesus, that his word was true and would be effective, allowed them to receive healing from God. The healing took place along the way as they were obedient. Pain, disease, distress, and being an outsider doesn't discriminate. Their only hope for reconciliation with their communities was to be cleansed, healed, and made whole. They would be readmitted by proving to the religious leaders that they were ritually clean. They're all sent to the priests to be readmitted to the community, but one, the Samaritan, falls down before Jesus and demonstrates his faith and love. Jesus seemed surprised that only one, the Samaritan, returned to give thanks and express his gratitude.

The nine neglected to express gratitude and there was no other mention of them or this incident in the New Testament. Luke stressed the event because it underscores why Christianity had been carried so directly and quickly to the Gentiles. The Jews had the first chance and had despised the day of gladness. The nine were worse off in their ingratitude. Their ingratitude was a worse leprosy than the leprosy of their skin. They were clean outside but they had not accepted cleansing on the inside. Healing needs to take place inside as well as outside.

The difference between the 10 lepers was the vision. The nine saw a healer, the immediate source of help for the problem. Just like we do sometimes, we want immediate healing. The Samaritan saw the answer to all his problems, heart and body. Sometimes we are too impatient to wait for God's answers to our needs. The nine saw a useful healer to remove the barrier to getting along with the old life. The Samaritan saw the end to his quest for healing inside, as well as outside.

The nine sought the blessings of the priest. The Samaritan praised God and saw his blessing. In the end the Samaritan saw a greater vision, the immediate source of help for the world, the door to a new world. He saw a Savior. Vision makes all the difference in the world for the world.

The nine Jews went on with their lives; the one Samaritan returned to express gratitude to Jesus. Jesus seemed as surprised as we would be that only one, the Samaritan, returned to give thanks.

Nine lepers took their gifts and ran. The tenth leper stopped to think about the significance of the gift he had been given and to respond to that gift. Of the 10 lepers, only the Samaritan - an outsider - responded with love, thanks, gratitude, and by putting his faith and trust in Jesus. He probably responded the same way when someone gave him food, when a sick friend shared space in a dry cave, or when he saw a beautiful sunset. This attitude was a big part of the faith that made him "whole." Vision makes the difference. What you see is what you get. This is the essential difference between the vision of the nine Lepers who were healed and did not express gratitude to Jesus and the one Samaritan who was healed and did express his gratitude. God's patience is not without limit. If no response is forthcoming from man or group, God seeks among others someone to carry out his bidding and it is usually someone that those who do the rejecting have learned to scorn. The nine were worse off in their ingratitude. Their ingratitude was a worse leprosy than the leprosy of their skin. They were clean outside but they had not accepted cleansing on the inside.

Healing needs to take place inside as well as outside. We need clean lives as well as clean skin. Many people worship and pray seeking only the gifts of God and not the person of Christ. This is why there is an inconsistency between talking about doing good and actually doing good.

The difference is in our vision. The nine saw a healer, the immediate source of help for the problem. The Samaritan saw the answer to all his

problems, heart and body. The nine saw a useful healer to remove the barrier to getting along with the old life. The Samaritan saw the end to his quest for healing inside, as well as outside. The nine sought the blessings of the priest. The Samaritan praised God and saw his blessing. In the end the Samaritan saw a greater vision, the immediate source of help for the world, the door to a new world. He saw a Savior.

We all understand and appreciate the importance of gratitude. How it can radically change relationships. In fact, one of the first things we were taught and that we teach our children is to express their gratitude. Someone gives them some candy and we say: "Now what do you say?" And the child learns from an early age the answer "Thank you." And certainly, we all know as adults that we appreciate being thanked. Yet, when it comes to giving thanks to our heavenly father, we so often miss the mark.

When it comes to giving our thanks to God, this story in the Bible that is so endearing to us, so timelessly appropriate, is the story of Jesus healing the ten lepers. We have all heard the story many times, but like so many Bible stories, we never tire of it because it reminds us again to be grateful for God's healing love....

Let our prayers look inward and outward at the same time. We pray for our own growth, our own healing, our own transformation. At the same time, we pray for a hurting and hungry world and for the will to reach beyond our walls in service and love. Let our songs sing of the Jesus who ate with sinners and healed the sick, the one who went out approved by God. Our readings remind us that wherever we are hemmed in and restricted, God is there in freedom. The ten men stood off at a distance. They were not allowed to come near anyone. To lepers who must keep their distance from everyone, Jesus speaks words of healing, obliterating the distance between them. To them and to us Jesus offers us freedom.