**Go Show Yourselves**

**To The Priests**

**Luke 17:11-19**

Thanksgiving – 11.24.2022

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

A couple comments in our Gospel lesson stand out to us. First, there is the comment from Jesus when the ten lepers begged Jesus for mercy, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.”

And then Jesus’ comment, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

That first comment many do not understand, and the second leads many to believe that only the Samaritan who returned to give thanks had faith. It is my hope that you will come to greater understanding, and that God’s Word, Christ, would come to you in the Word you are hearing and build in you greater faith – which is what I pray will happen with every sermon I proclaim.

I am going to go backwards in our text. Jesus declares that the Samaritan’s faith has made him well. So, what is faith? Should we also point to our faith, and expect great things from **“our faith”**?

If you are like I am, faith is all over the place. One day my faith is firm, I know that in God all things are possible. The next day I am wondering if there even is a God, much less that He loves me and sent His Son to die for me. My faith is a fickle thing, and tenuous thing.

However, the One in whom my faith trusts? That is a whole different story! He is the faithful One. God is faithful and just! He is righteousness and peace! He supplies me with all that I need for the support and care of this body and my life! He redeemed me, even though I was a lost and condemned person. And, because I cannot – by my own reason or strength believe in Him – He grants me His Spirit who calls me by the Gospel, enlightens me with His gifts, and make me holy – strengthening me in the true faith.

So I ask you, Your faith has saved you? Is it your faith? Or, is it that to which your faith is entrusted, which saves you? What faith does, is appropriate that to which it clings as it's very own. So when our faith is in Christ, all that is Christ's is ours.

So, the Samaritan in our text trusted that what Christ proclaimed to them would be true. He ran off with the other nine to go show themselves to the priests. After leaving with the other lepers, he noticed that he was healed, just as the others had been made clean. That which his Faith had believed had come true. Noting his cleansed condition, He returned to Jesus to give him thanks.

How many of the ten had faith? OK, let me ask it this way, “How many of the ten were made well by faith?” Maybe it would help if you read the text. *And as* ***THEY*** *went they were cleansed*. How many of them were cleansed of their leprosy? Correct, ALL of them.

So, how many had faith?

That is correct, they all did!

Note the sequence of events as I read a portion of our text again:

*On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, 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 cleansed.*

Did you note it? These ten lepers know of Jesus, they have heard the stories about His magnificent works and His preaching with authority, but because of their leprosy, they had to stand at a distance. They were unclean, unholy, pariahs. Leprosy was seriously contagious, and by it many died horrific deaths as it ravaged their bodies. So lepers were constrained by law and by common sense to remain at a distance.

They were required to exclude themselves from the community. They were cut off from the fellowship of the church. They were to keep themselves away, at a certain distance, from even their own families. It was for the safety of those who had not the contagion of leprosy.

This corresponds to the contagious nature of sinfulness, and why God declares in numerous placed that sinfulness is uncleanness, and that those who remain impenitent are to remain apart from the congregation. Their sinfulness, and the consequences of it, are serious enough that others must see the deathly nature of their disease by the seriousness of separation.

Only priests were given the authority to declare someone who was unclean to be clean. Only the priests had authority to assert that someone could return to their faith and life communities, and return in fellowship with the church.

These lepers – these unclean – call out to Jesus from a distance, following the prescriptions of the law, *“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”* “Jesus, You who has Divine authority, if it is Your will, grant us grace and healing.”

Jesus’ response to their request for mercy, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.”

It is the priests who can declare that you are indeed clean.

It is the priest who has the authority to declare you are fit to return to your family.

It is the priest who has the authority to return you to your community.

It is the priest who had the authority to return you to the fellowship of faith.

But the priest only has this authority after he has examined you and determined that you are without any more blemish of leprosy. Once declaring you such, then you had to follow the prescribed rituals and make the appropriate sacrifices, waiting the prescribed time before you may finally return to “life as normal.”

After Jesus told them to show themselves to the priests, what did they do? They went! There was no evidence of their being healed before the left. Our text asserts that “***As they went*** they were cleansed.” They heard Jesus declaration and they all believed that the only reason to go to the priests was because that one, who had authority to declare them cleansed, would find them to be so.

When Jesus asserts to the Samaritan that “his faith had made him well,” it was true also of the other nine. They all had the faith to be healed, exhibited in their immediately heading to the priests who could declare them clean and thereby allow them access to their families and other communities. Their faith was evident in their action – they went…and the object of their faith was realized. They went, trusting that God – in the Word of Jesus – would grant the mercy they requested, and it happened just as they believed.

Dear friends in Christ, is your faith showing? Do you expect God to do great things and act accordingly, as did the lepers in our text? Asking Jesus for mercy and hearing His declaration, “Go and show yourselves to the priests,” their faith was showing.

They believed Jesus at His word and went. It was in the going, that their faith was showing, for they did exactly as Christ instructed, faithfully trusting that they would be healed on the way. That is exactly what happened.

One of them, a Samaritan, when he saw that he was healed, returned to give thanks to Jesus. His faith had been evident in his departing with the others to show himself to the priest. But, his faith began to show in a new way. Realizing that it was Jesus who had healed Him, he returned to give thanks – the priests could wait – returning to his family could wait – returning to his community could wait. It was of the most importance to give thanks to Him who granted him healing and a new life.

This is what the Samaritan does in our text. It does not cost him anything, just a few words, and yet, it pleases our Lord so much that it fills us with awe. In fact, it is this text – especially the Samaritan’s thankfulness – which brings this text to bear on this national day of Thanksgiving.

*“Go and show yourselves to the priests.”*

You are here, for you know that your spiritual well-being is the most important aspect of your life. You have come into God’s house, to have yourselves declared clean – washed in the blood of the Lamb. United to Christ’s death and resurrection in baptism, you live the new life He gives you.

*“Go and show yourselves to the priests.”* And you came today, expecting great things from your God. You expected to receive incredible gifts from His gracious and merciful hand.

*“Go and show yourselves to the priests.”* You did so, confessing your sinfulness, expecting to be forgiven. And indeed you are.

*“Go and show yourselves to the priests.”* You are still awake during this sermon, believing that God will bless and strengthen your faith through His Word to you by the mouth of His under-shepherd.

*“Go and show yourselves to the priests.”* It appears to be only a thin wafer of bread and a sip of wine, you have faith and believe that Christ’s body and blood – the same body pierced and the same blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins upon the cross – is delivered to you in this meal. You eat trusting that your faith will be strengthened to life everlasting and to salvation as you eat and drink of this most holy food.

Give thanks to God for all the great and mighty wonders He has done to you and will continue to do for you, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.