### *October 11, 2020, Thanksgiving Sunday*

### *The Woman in Lambly Park - Based on* Luke 17:11-19

### *Prayer:*

***On the way to Penticton she was going through the region between Kelowna and Summerland. As she entered a village named Peachland, a group of 10 vagrants approached her. They kept their distance across the street and called out, “hey lady, you know where we can get a meal around here? We are tired and hungry and we have been on the road a long time.” When she saw them, she said “follow me.” She walked with them up to the local IGA and she bought all of them sandwiches, fresh fruit and something to drink. Then she left them to eat in peace.***

***In a while one of them ran after her, he found her sitting on the grass in Lambly Park. And he said to her, “I can’t thank you enough for your generous gift. I was so tired and hungry. It was so good to rest and eat. Your kindness means a lot.” His clothes were tattered and torn and he had not had a shower in quite some time.***

***The woman asked, where are the rest of your friends? There were 10 of you weren’t there? “Have they anything to say?” The individual was silent.***

***“Well I am glad I could help,” she said. “I hope you have a safe journey as you travel. Many Blessings to you.”***

The times change but the situations sure don’t. I was in the sanctuary last week one afternoon playing with the audio-visual equipment to see if I could figure out a way to get a zoom connection to work while conducting a worship service. That is proving to be a challenge, but you will hear more about that in time.

I visitor walked into the sanctuary and indicated she needed some help. She had walked a long way to get to Peachland, close to 20 km I think. And she had all her possessions with her in a small cart. More than anything she was seeking safety. “Let me make a few phone calls,” I said. She replied that she was sorry to be an inconvenience. I told her that the church is here to help if we can, and it was no trouble at all.

A call and a referral, and then I left her in the hall on the phone with someone who I was hoping could assist. Things seemed to be working out which pleased me. So many folks in desperate need find more doors shut than open.

Our visitor needed a bit more help to gather her belongings and get to a rendezvous point. I offered to do that. On the way we ed did talk a little about her faith, but more about her gratitude. She expressed genuine thankfulness for my generosity and support. She couldn’t believe that I, (or that we as a church community) could be so gracious. This was really a surprise to her. “I have never experienced this before and I don’t expect many people would be so kind,” she said. “We like to do what we can when we can,” I replied. “It is part of our mission.”

It is unlikely that I will see her again. We hope and pray that she will be OK.

The “missional” church is thankfully still doing wonderful pastoral work in the world regardless of denomination. And you, those that support it are part of that mission, to hold up the lonely, the desperate, the hungry, the thirsty or those needing shelter. And I have no doubt whatsoever that you all have a “missional sense” in your personal lives too. You live by the values of kindness, fairness, justice and of course love. You ty to live the gospel as much as you can.

And you don’t do it for accolades. It is not about stroking our own ego as we are reminded in the Deuteronomy text that Wayne read for us. ***11Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today.”*** But***, 17Do not say to yourself, “My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.”***

Jesus of course was never one to jump up and down exclaiming his divine power. You never heard him say, “Look at me, I cured that man from his blindness,” or “Take heed, recognize my power, I brought that person back from death.”

In today’s gospel he simply advised the 10 affected with leprosy to see the priests, knowing that they would be healed. The miracle may have occurred through him, but Jesus knew this was God’s work, and would seek no credit. He only says, ***““Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”***

We are not normally inclined to expect anything for our acts of compassion. A recognition and thank you is appreciated, but it is not a prerequisite of our “doing.” Jesus would have been a little disappointed that only one of those healed came and offered thanks. But he continued to offer the same random acts of kindness over and over. He did that regardless of whether his acts of healing were appreciated. He kept on doing his ministry, recognizing the good in everyone regardless of class or social standing and regardless of his own personal safety.

God calls us to be like that, to be like the woman in Lambly Park. We might never know what our grace filled actions do in the world.

Of all the people that we touch in some kind way, do we really know how they are affected? Are you content that what you do is keeping with Jesus’ universal message, “Love one another as I have loved you?”

What motivates us is not personal gain, it is hearts filled with gentleness and compassion. It is a living God working a little celestial magic through us; Jesus pulling us ever closer to the unconditional love he preached.

I don’t believe we hear though the gospels if any of the 9 others that Jesus and the priests healed ever stopped and prayed their thanks. Perhaps they would one day conduct acts of grace themselves. The fate of the wanderers that visited Peachland in our story line has the same unknowns. Does that matter? If it does, we put conditions on our acts of graciousness.

My pastoral activities the other day were a bit different from the norm, and I would admit it was so encouraging to hear from our visitor that she so appreciated my kindness (and in that an implied appreciation for the generosity from PUC). She was the one of the 10 in Jesus’ parable we heard this morning who stopped and prayed gratitude.

I might be able to offer help to 9 more travellers who need something. Perhaps they won’t give me the sense that my time and effort is appreciated. That’s OK, the work we do and the ministry we provide has no strings attached. It is good enough for me to know I am doing Jesus’ work with God’s hand by my side in the process. I’m thankful I can do that.

I’m content to be the woman in Lambly Park. Are you?

Thank you for listening this morning.

Amen