



“Be Loud in Your Thanks!”

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October 13, 2019

Scripture (NRSV):

Luke 17:11-19

11 On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, 13 they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean.

15 Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. 16 He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? 18 Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19 Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

Sermon:

I am no leper. You are no leper, either.

If you made it here today, you already had a lot of good going on in your body and in your life.

I hope you can sit there in your pew and be grateful for everything, and maybe, everyone, who helped you get out of bed and into your clothes and over to this worship space.

I invite you to sit right where you are, and close your eyes and take some inventory: how did you get here today? Who showed up for you today?

Does your inventory include the people who produced the food, the coffee, the tea you had this morning?

Does your inventory include the newspaper delivery person, the folks on the air on the radio spinning your tunes, or giving you the morning news?

Does your inventory include thanks for a beloved pet?

Are you grateful for the city workers who are **STILL** cleaning up fallen branches and broken trees all over our city?

You get my meaning don't you?

Our inventory for thanksgiving, when we are honest and aware, should be **BIG**.

And we are not even lepers.

If you are here, you are in a safe place, a welcoming community. If you are here, there are lights, and heat, food and drink, companions for hugs and conversation if you want it and need it.

No, we are not lepers.

You and I should be, can be, hugely grateful. There is much to be loud in our praise about!

And we are not even lepers.

Or is that true?

In spite of all we have, evidence of abundance all around us this morning, perhaps we live also with the evidence of sickness, and brokenness?

We live with our broken hearts and our broken dreams and our broken lives.

Some of us live without a safety net of loving family, or steady work, or inner peace.

Maybe we *can* count ourselves as lepers...like them, strangers to the rest of society, rejected, outcast, isolated, considered diseased; discounted or feared.

- Because mental illness frightens people, and homelessness has become a crime, and being lesbian, gay or transgender is an invitation to violence against you.
- Choosing to marry who you love can be a reason to discriminate against you.

- The color of your skin, the status you have as immigrant or undocumented person, can envelop you in fear, single you out for hate speech and cruelty and violence against body and soul.

There are many ways of being perceived as a leper.

And there are many ways that the community of Jesus can be the healing that we hunger for!

With doors open to share compassion and laughter, food and drink. With room in the pew. With friendship in the hall downstairs, and a safe place for our children, our vulnerable, our elders. With money to stave off homelessness, and contacts and connections to help repair the broken places in our lives.

And with thanksgiving at being here together. Thanks for this place, and this people. For, to hark back to our call to worship, we are like that cord of three strands...we are not easily broken when we are together, when we are there to support one another.

I mentioned in the hotsheet on Friday that I was forcibly reminded of how grateful I am for this place and this people and I want to tell you why: late last week I had coffee with a young pastor who was solo, without support staff, without enough money, and in a struggling community that had yet to come together with an identity of common mission; and had yet to build up leaders to join him in their common work of being the Body of Christ in the world.

He was so tired! And he was only 24.

I hope that I can be of service to him, and support.

But I am also abundantly aware of the support and service of all of you, the people of Westminster. In your many skills and talents, we are strengthened. In our need and our brokenness, we comfort and heal one another.

You are amazing.

You are gifted.

You are generous in sharing your giftedness.

I want to be loud in my thanks, loud like that Samaritan, who came back to Jesus to thank him for their healing.

Like that Samaritan, I hope you hear me today... Thank You for being you. Whether you have been here for moments, or dozens of years.

Thank you for showing the face and the heart of Christ in all you do.

Thank you for the healing you share, for the goodness and kindness, for the hope and the laughter, the crazy fun ideas and events, the times when we hold on to each other in grief and confusion.

Thank you for all of it.

I thank God for all of you.

I hope I am loud enough, that you can hear me: You are a blessing. You are wonderful.

Thank you.