

Scripture Readings:

Psalm 150

Luke 17:11-19

Gratitude of the Spirit

You Are a Composer! - Row, Row, Row your Boat Thanks giving song. (a group composed a song of thanksgiving)

Telling the Gospel (Luke 17:11–19) (another group acted out the gospel story)

What stood out for you in this story?

What is the message you learned?

Most of us have heard this story before and so we likely know- These ten leprous men -were banned from living in town. They could not live with their families. They could not go to worship. They could not attend any of the important events of the community, because they were a danger to the community's health. They had to live on the outskirts of town and had to shout the warning that they were unclean.

And so when the prophet Jesus passed by they ran as close to him as they could, calling for the “Master” to transform their lives. Somehow they had heard of His healing gifts. And so “Hoping against hope they ask to be set free from the terrible curse of their condition. Hoping against hope they ask to be set free to be able to live once again in community.” And Jesus in holy grace and compassion did just that.

We know all of these lepers were excited to be healed. They were, after all, rushing to see a priest and be pronounced clean so that they might once again live in community with families and friends. And I imagine they felt they entitled to that. But gratitude is not found when we get something we feel we deserve, gratitude is found when we appreciate what we have and are given without a sense of entitlement. Gratitude is also about relationship, and, in this case, its found in relationship with Jesus. The nine called Him "Master,"? And yet they really didn't know Jesus, and they couldn't see anything other than their own victimization. They had been thrown out of the community. They had been forced to live unhappy and hopeless lives - disregarded, disenfranchised. And yet their story is that they can go back to a place of wholeness.

So what was the difference with the one? The one that shows gratitude to Jesus is a Samaritan. The other nine men are Jews and will be welcomed back into their community. But the Samaritan will have to go to his own people. Healed or not, the Samaritan remains a Samaritan - despised by the Jewish community. He will still live as an outcast and underdog of sorts. He

can't go to the priest and be pronounced clean he will once again likely be rejected even by the nine he was journeying with before they were healed.

As I pondered this story, I pondered the piece of culture shock I am still struggling with daily having returned from the Philippines. Gratitude, thanksgiving, compassion and community was what I experienced over and over there. And yet I stayed with people who lived in what we would consider poverty. We stayed with family and friends in homes that made me look very wealthy. I didn't need to go far to see families living in shacks and boxes. I watched and experienced life with people who work hard for the daily struggle of life and I watched and experienced people living in gratitude for everything they had in life. I found myself wanting to share life with them, and give from my abundance because I was so grateful for all they shared with me.

I think that is why the Samaritan got it. He didn't live the privileged life the others did. He didn't feel entitled to the healing, he was simply grateful for every breath of life. He realized that he had been given a gift, and opportunity, a new life.

Why is it that we need to struggle, or have little to appreciate what we have. Why do we feel so often feel entitled to more than we have? When we feel entitled we miss the gifts that surround us every day of our lives. When we live in appreciation of every thing we have and every breath we breath we will know how much we really have. It took a Samaritan to see that Jesus' healing was about something much more than returning to an old life. It was about a whole new life.

In this Pentecost season (and every day) we have been offered that kind of new life. We have been offered the Spirit, moving in and through us to do more than we can possibly believe or imagine through the presence of the holy within us. We have been focusing on the "Winds of Change" in the last weeks. We have been reminded that we have been called to dream and vision with the Spirit to create new life. We are to allow the Spirit to move freely move us like the kite of visions and dreams we created, like the balloon and the bubbles and the windvane. What if when we engaged that Spirit moving in and through us we were transformed to live with more gratitude and joy each and every day? What if that is how we lived as a congregation as we move through this exciting new season of transformation? Remembering that each breath and movement in the "Winds of Change" is a movement of the Spirit. A life in the spirit can bring us to this place with joy and gratitude each week being grateful to that One that comes to us in the Breaking of the Bread and in the Cup of Blessing. We are living members of the Body of Christ that knows no boundaries of time or space.

The Samaritan got more than the other nine, because He was grateful for the holy mercy and grace he received.

May we live in such gratitude each and every moment of our life.

Prayer of Thanksgiving: Putting Words to Each Letter