

*Rise and go your way; your faith has saved you... (Luke 17:19)*

In October, we're going to hear the well-known story of the Ten Lepers. The lepers call Jesus Master and ask that Jesus have mercy on them. Now, mind you, Jesus is under no obligation to have mercy on anyone. Jesus could just as well tell them to go back to their camp and leave him alone. But, after his command to them to *Go and show yourselves to the priests*, they found themselves healed on the way.

You probably remember that, of the ten who were healed, only one comes back to thank Jesus and give praise to God. Yet, this text is so obviously not about simply saying 'thank you' to God for all that he has done. One man, the outcast among the outcasts, who remained unclean and unworthy because he was a Samaritan, recognized what was going on. He knew that Jesus could heal him, yet he received so much more. The Lord had come *to save him*. Jesus, his Master, his Lord, God in the flesh, this Jesus had come *to save him*. God doesn't owe us anything, yet through faith we believe that God is gracious to us. Does that mean he's going to give us anything we ask for every time in this life? Does faith mean that God will cure you of cancer? Does it mean he will help your loved one pull through again? Does faith mean that all hurt in our lives will be prevented or erased? Does faith pay the bills? Let's say, for the sake of argument, that God does show you this temporary mercy. Say he heals you. What then? Temporary is exactly what this mercy would be. Because what's going to happen later on? Sickness will return. More hurt will come. The next bill will arrive in the mail.

What the leper recognized is that there is something more important than what God can do for us in this life. The ten lepers had faith to be healed of their disease, but only one came back to give praise to God at the feet of Jesus. How easy it is for us value the gifts over the Giver! How often we long for creation over the Creator! How tempting it is to "get what I want" and then go about my business! Brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus may well answer your prayers with a firm "yes." He may heal you, he may give you peace, he may restore your relationships. Then again, he may not. But there is something much greater going on. Think about who you are when you encounter Jesus. We all come before God as unworthy, as unclean, poor, miserable sinners. We are servants of our Master. God doesn't owe us anything. And yet, in Jesus, he does more than heal. He saves.

God is in the business of keeping his promises. He may not give us everything we want right now. But, when he comes again, he will heal us. He will restore us. He will raise us to new life, in bodies without pain, minds absent loneliness and suffering, and souls free of sin. We deserve none of it, yet it is ours. So, we continue to give praise and thanks to God in Christ, even as unworthy servants. *Rise and go. Your faith has saved you!*

-Pastor Squire

"Yet even though I suffer the world's unpleasantness, and though the days grow rougher and bring me great distress, that day of bliss divine, which knows no end or measure, and Christ, who is my pleasure, forever shall be mine."

("From God Can Nothing Move Me," *LSB 713*, v. 6)