

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Thanksgiving Eve
Wednesday, November 22, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.

“Your Faith Has Made You Well”

Luke 17:11-19

Tomorrow, our nation turns its attention to giving thanks even more so than what we do on a regular basis. If you were a visitor to America for the first time tomorrow, when you look around at the theme of the day, what would you think the focus of the day is all about? You would probably assume that the day is in thanks for mass quantities of food, football, turkeys of all shapes and sizes dressed in strange clothing, and the right to go shopping in the wee hours of the morning.

Our Gospel lesson appointed for this National Day of Thanksgiving is, of course, very appropriate and fits the real theme of the day. This event, as recorded in Luke’s Gospel, is one that we have all heard many times before.

The ten men with leprosy make their plea to the Lord: “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” This is the same plea that we make three times each Sunday

morning in the Kyrie: “Lord, have mercy upon us; Christ, have mercy upon us; Lord, have mercy upon us.”

The story of the ten lepers is really our story. We were the diseased, outcast people whose only hope was in a miraculous healing performed by Christ Himself. But rather than merely being inflicted with an infectious skin disease, we were born with a fatal illness called sin.

And just as Christ healed all 10 of the lepers, God has also shown mercy and grace to all people. As the Psalmist says: “The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities” [Ps. 103:8-10].

Christ carried the burden of all the sin of the world on His shoulders. Christ died on the cross to pay the ransom price for all people’s sin. And just as only one of the ten lepers returned to give thanks to the Lord, so also, as God’s faithful people, we continue to find ourselves to be a minority in this world.

God our Father has been very slow to anger, and this is something for which we should be very thankful. We deserve to be condemned immediately

the first time and every time that we have sinned. But God has given the people of this world, His children whom He loves, the opportunity not only to live out our lives and have clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, etc. But we have the opportunity to experience a greater act of mercy and compassion than just allowing us to live for a few years on this earth.

Like the one leper who returned, we have received the greater healing. Not only was he healed of his disease, as were the other nine, but he received the greater healing. Christ says, “Your faith has made you well.” The healing of that man went way beyond his skin disease. Faith brings so much more. We are saved by grace through faith. The forgiveness of sins is the greater healing.

Like the leper, not only have we been blessed with the mercy and compassion that all of mankind has received by being allowed to live and not fall under immediate and final judgment, and we have clothing and shoes, food and drink. But we have received that greater healing that only comes through the mercy of God – that is the forgiveness of sins.

And for this, not only do we return today and give thanks to our Creator, but we have reason to truly rejoice – as Paul encourages us to do in his letter to

the Philippians. Our Lord takes away all reason to be anxious. He brings peace which “surpasses all understanding.” He guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. He gives the strength to endure whatever situation or circumstance comes our way. Our Lord who provides, and our Savior who redeems us from our slavery to unrighteousness, who purchased us with His own blood, and cleansed us from our fatal disease of sin says to us, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

Our love and thankfulness for these great gifts are the result of and the response to the cleansing we have received – are the response to our having been baptized and forgiven. We look at the life we have with God and the promises of future glory, and we know that none of this is our doing. In response to this, we can really do nothing other than to follow the example of the leper who was healed: return to Christ, throw ourselves at His feet, and thank Him.

And as we do that here this evening, we can depart in joy having heard the words of Christ: “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.” Amen.