

Trinity XIV

September 1, 2024

Galatians 5: 16-24 & Luke 17: 11-19

For some time now we have been talking about the marks of the Kingdom of God, what it looks like, and the requirements to get in. Just last week, we learned about love that the Good Samaritan expressed toward a stranger, the man who was half dead. This is to teach us that there is nothing deadly in the Kingdom of God. Everything in it is alive and strong. Likewise, there is nothing impure in it. So, today's lesson is about **purity**. That's why Jesus healed the ten lepers in today's gospel on his way to Jerusalem.

These ten lepers are separated from society because of their disease. They cry out for mercy. And that is a cry that Jesus will never ignore. He always hears and responds to such a cry. Remember what he said in the sermon on the Mount, "Ask and ye shall receive." These ten lepers asked and did receive. Jesus tells them to go and see the priest. Under the Law of Moses, people who had leprosy and were healed would need to go first to the priest who would examine them to confirm it and then declare them healed and they could then live in the community again. So, without seeing themselves healed immediately, these lepers walk towards the Temple in faith to seek the priests, trusting Jesus, and as they follow his command, they are healed.

Lessons for us

1. We are called to develop a life of prayer, which is having a constant conversation with God by talking and listening to him. The more we pray, the less we fall away from "the works he has prepared for us to walk in." Following Jesus in faith, and listening to the callings of his Spirit leads to holiness, to a cleansing, a purifying of our lives. The new path becomes easier and easier. It is the life of growing in holiness.
2. The second lesson is what the Samaritan experienced. He experienced the full force of the new path. The fruit of the Spirit which St Paul speaks about in today's epistle is manifested in him. He is "praising God with a loud voice"! love, joy, and peace, he now knows and will continue to know as he stays close to Jesus. He has known not just a temporary relief from sin, but, as Jesus says, "Your faith has made you whole." The lesson here is that when we pray, we need to pray in faith. As the author of the Letter to the Hebrews put it, "Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." (Hebrews 11: 1) Yes, beloved in Christ, faith gives us hope and assurance in the unseen. It helps us see beyond the physical world. Faith enables us to look at life differently and understand that it is true we have nothing, yet we possess everything.

Acting in faith takes courage, and sometimes even makes us look foolish, yet we need to persist. The greater the risk, the greater the faith it builds. That's why we need the grace of God.

3. Grace is not just about coming to church, reading the bible (all day long), or praying all day long. Grace is a gift of God, and he gives it to whom he wants, when, where, and how. God gives you his grace regardless of where you have been, or where you are right now; regardless of where life or people have put you. You may be a "good Christian," a bible scholar, someone who knows the bible and quotes it left and right, and yet, still miss the grace of God. On the other hand, a person that you see who is far away from the church and who doesn't know the bible will receive the grace of God. The grace of God does not depend on you. It depends on God, and God alone.

"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh," tells us St Paul in today's epistle. We pray for strength for our spiritual life in its three aspects: more faith in God, more hope in respect for ourselves, and more love toward others. So, may the Word of God and the Sacrament of the Body and blood of Christ that we receive restore us to this new life of purity.

Prayer

Dear Lord, show us how to live in a place where we are aware of our constant communion with You.

As Your children we humbly come before You. Thank You that we get to rest under the shelter of Your wings, here in the secret place of Your presence. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.