

Luke 17:11-19

**On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee.
as he entered a village,**

then lepers approached him.

Keeping their distance,

they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy us!”

When he saw them, he said to them,

‘Go and show yourselves to the priests’

And as they went, they were made clean.

Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed,

turned back praising God with a loud voice.

He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him.

And he was a Samaritan.

Then Jesus asked, ‘Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?’

Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’

Then Jesus said him, ‘Get up and go on your way;

your faith has made you well.’

Meditation

**A number of years ago, when my children were between the ages of 8 & 12,
the doctors found that I had a rather large abdominal ‘bump’....**

I thought I had been eating too many Fanny Mae chocolates...

but no, they said, this needs to come out...

Not sure what it is, they said...but it is possible that it is cancer...

Now, no mom with children in elementary school wants to hear something like that.

Gratefully it wasn’t cancer, just a big cyst...

**but in the hours after surgery there were complications and I had to return to the operating
room for a second time that same day..**

Once again, gratefully, no long term ill effects,

but there could have been very serious consequences....

When I returned home after a week in the hospital

healthy and healing...

I was overwhelmed with gratitude...

because I felt as if I was given a second chance at life...

and I vowed to make some real changes in my life...

and, to be honest... I have.

Today’s reading involves 10 men with leprosy.

**Back then, as you probably know, if you were a leper you were not allowed
to be a part of your family or your village.**

**You would have to live in the lepers colony...
and if or when you went into town for provisions,
you would have to call out “unclean! unclean!”
so that everyone could stay away from you.
You could no longer live with your family, your kids or your spouse or your neighbors...
because you might contaminate them with your sinfulness..
So not only were you physically sick,
but you were now isolated and alone...
mocked and avoided...
and known as a sinner: rejected by God and people alike...
It was a horribly difficult situation: physically, emotionally and religiously...**

**So now...when these men were made clean of their disease,
when their apparent sinfulness was taken away...
they could be reunited with their families...
they could go home,
they could walk around the market place
laugh and joke with their friends
and they could go to their Temple.
They could become part of their communities and their families once again...
They were indeed given a second chance at life...**

**As the story continues, though...
only one of them—the Samaritan- came back to give thanks to Jesus and to praise God....
Most of the time this story is preached,
as a lesson on Gratitude...
But is this Gospel story really only teaching etiquette?
Is Jesus and Luke just trying to make sure that we mind our manners
in our relationship with God?**

Nah....

Biblical scholar Jack Shea says that when the Samaritan falls at the feet of Jesus, “it is (and I quote) more than a profound moment of worship... it symbolizes his commitment to the teachings of Jesus and his desire to follow the way of life Jesus advocates. Praise and gratitude are necessary first responses, Shea says...but more is required. Therefore Jesus instructs him to ‘get up and go’ Go! It is time to live and not to return to old ways but to find a new way that his faith in Jesus had begun to forge for him...end quote.

but of course the question is: did the Samaritan choose to follow the teachings of Jesus because of his healing?

Did the other nine Jewish lepers become followers of Jesus because of their healing or did they return to the old patterns of thought and belief that Jesus was trying to change?

All 10 of them had a second chance at life...did any one of them take it?

We don’t know.

But I think we do know how hard it is to change our ways...

Often...one of the reasons that we often hang on to old habits and routines is because they are simply that: habits and routines...

their comfortable...we know what to do and what is expected of us...

even if they aren’t always the most beneficial

or even if they cause us some pain...

Sometimes the pain we know seems safer than a future filled with unknowns....

Sometimes having a new beginning offered to you –a second chance at life can be scary...

**Sometimes the desire to change is great
but the work it takes to change is just too much and too hard.**

**In my own situation, when I came home from the hospital with a clean bill of health
I distinctly remember making a vow to myself to live a more authentic life.
Now...without going into all the gory details,
for much of my life up until that point,
I had been a people pleaser to an unhealthy degree.
It had gotten to the point by that time in my life,
I felt as if I didn't know who I was...
I felt as if I was merely a reflection of whoever was most important in
my life at the time...**

**Once I started voicing my opinions and/or making my own choices...
some people that I was close to, weren't very happy with me.
I had more disagreements...
and in the beginning it was a very rocky road**

**Yet, I knew I could not continue to live a life that I had felt wasn't my own...
So with a lot of prayer,
some counseling and a whole lot of love and support from those who truly loved me,
I took advantage of my second chance at life...
I don't think I would be doing what I am doing today...standing here,
reflecting with you if I didn't take advantage of
being given a second chance at life.**

**And the good news is...
We don't have to do it all by ourselves...
We already everything we need but most often don't see it..**

**We have the strength, the wisdom and the power of the Holy
already deep inside,
but we must yes..
and in our yes,
we become more open and aware
We become more able to draw from that well of grace that already exists within...**

**Have you ever been given a second chance at life?
Maybe it wasn't a serious illness,
but perhaps it was a second chance in an important relationship?
or maybe you finally realized a habit of yours was ruining your happiness..
Second chances happen in a variety of situations...
New life can be physical, emotional or spiritual....**

**Second chances are offered all the time...
every morning when we awake...
every moment we take another breath
is another opportunity to make a different choice...
a choice to live in and through the Love of God
a choice for Life, a choice for joy and hope and peace
and compassion and mercy...
a choice for the Reign of Heaven on Earth...**

**So...the question for this moment in time:
What is YOUR choice?
Amen.**