

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle
20th Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 23—C)
10 October 2010
Grace and Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita
Lk 17.11-19

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

The Lord is known by His giving gifts to us.
He gives and we receive.

He gives life and health, food and drink, body and soul—in a word: everything.

Everything we have and everything we are is marked by Him giving and us receiving.

And while everything He gives is for our good,
it doesn't always seem to be that way.
In fact, there are times we say "No thank you" to what He gives.

We don't like it when He gives us trials and tribulations,
suffering from illness, disease, and death.
We don't like it when He gives us difficult problems, or lose-lose situations.

We don't like it when He gives us loneliness, rejection, or brokenness.
We don't like being a leper.

A leper is one who bears in his body a repulsive disease.
He's rejected by family, friends, and society as a whole;
he's lonely, in tremendous pain, and can't fix anything about his situation.

A leper seeks help—just a little reprieve from a hard, hard life—
but can't find any to be found.

The leper wonders why he won't just die and be rid of his misery.

The truth is, we're all lepers.

Our problem, however, is that we generally don't think we are.

Sure, we recognize a leper when we see one—
But it's rare to see it in ourselves.

And what if we *never* did?
What if we walked around, day in, day out, acting as if we weren't a bunch of lepers?
What if our skin started deteriorating, and we explained it away as a common cold—
or our minds begin slipping on us, and we say we haven't had our coffee yet?
What if, while laying on our death bed, we said, "Oh, it's nothing—I'll be fine"?

If we never noticed our leprosy, we'd have no desire for its cure.

And so, just as any missionary knows, the Gospel makes little sense without the Law.
A cure for leprosy doesn't do a bunch of non-leprous people any good.

Therefore we thank our Lord for His word of Law for this very reason:
it shows us our leprosy.

We thank Him for giving us the hardships, difficulties, pain and suffering, the cross—
for without these, without seeing our leprosy,
we'd have no desire for its cure.

In today's Gospel there are 10 who recognize their leprosy.
10 have felt their rejection, their loneliness, their inability to make things right.
10, who, when they see Jesus,
Recognize the One who bears the cure.

And so all 10 cry out:
"Jesus, Master, have *mercy* on us!" (Lk 17:13)
Kyrie Eleison!

Now, without any sign, any effort, or even any "Go, you are healed"—
Jesus simply directs these 10 to show themselves to the priests.

All 10 are healed.
All 10, on their way, are freed from their leprosy.
All 10 receive mercy, life, and restoration.

But here the story turns.
In fact, 1 turns, running and shouting the praises of this man Jesus.
1 comes back, falls on his face, and worships Jesus.

What happened to the other 9?

I don't know.
Presumably they went to the priests as directed.

But the story is not about the other 9.
It's about the 1—
the 1 who now lay at the feet of Jesus.

And this 1 is a Samaritan, an outsider, a reject.

But even this reject recognizes Jesus as the giver and himself the receiver.
Even the reject recognizes his leprosy and its cure as both gifts of God.

If this Samaritan hadn't been gifted with leprosy,
who's to say he'd ever be at the feet of God in the flesh?

Now, because Jesus always gives more than we'd imagine or deserve,
 He gives this Samaritan-reject even more than a cure for his leprosy—
 He gives Him eternal healing and full restoration (Lk 17:19).

He's no longer a reject,
 neither from society, the Temple, nor the people of God.

This leper has been given the gift of faith, salvation—
 he's been given the whole Jesus undeservedly and unexpectedly.

And so have you.

To Christ belong all the power and authority and wisdom and inheritance of heaven.
 And Christ is known as the One who gives it all to you.

He removes your rejection, your loneliness, your broken relationships, and your hate.
 He heals your diseases: your Alzheimer's, cancer, achy-bones and weak knees.
 And He gives you Himself.

The goal of every missionary is to give this Jesus to all.
 The missionary must break through the self-deception that all is well,
 and then, bind up what broke by giving Jesus.

This is what the LWML excels in.
 These ladies have been gifted tremendously and can't help but to give tremendously.

Time, quilts, aid, money, prayer, food, clothing—
 the list goes on and on.

The LWML has recognized what it means to receive all they have from Christ.
 And, like the 1 who returned to give thanks,
 give everything they have for the service of Christ and His Church.

That is what stewardship is all about—
 recognizing Christ as giver of all things.

When He is seen as the One whose gifts never cease and never depend on our own doing—
 then, like the 1, who returned in thanksgiving,
 we can't help but to do the same.

We're all a bunch of lepers—
 it's good for us to admit it.

Because it just so happens that Christ came to have mercy on a bunch of lepers.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit