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Thanksgiving Eve  
26 November 2014  
Grace-Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita  
Lk 17:11-19

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

We set our standards fairly low.

Parents are grateful if their kids eat most of their food and a bite of veggies,  
while even I remember the consequences of not finishing what's on the plate.  
Teachers are grateful if students turn the work in at all,  
even if it's late, full of typos, and shows signs they carelessly threw it in the bag.  
And as a Church, we're grateful that anyone shows up,  
even if their minds are elsewhere.

We're grateful for many things,  
but none are as they should be, but only *enough*.

We set our standards low because we're afraid that if we ask for more, we'll get even less.

*Repent.*

Jesus asks for more.

In the healing of the lepers, Jesus isn't grateful that one turned back, praising Him.  
While this Samaritan has his face in the dirt, giving glory to God in the person of Christ,  
Jesus *ungratefully* says,  
"Where are the other nine?" (Lk 17:17)

Jesus isn't content with one, as if that's *enough*.  
10 asked for mercy; 10 were cleansed by His word; 1 turned back in thanksgiving.

That's 10 percent!  
We'd be lucky if people gave 10% of their income!  
We'd rejoice if 10% came to Church regularly!  
We'd be ecstatic if 10% gathered their families in prayer and the reading of Scripture!

Not Jesus.  
Jesus wants all 10 – 100%.

But He doesn't want all 10 to come by force.  
He doesn't *unheal* the lepers who kept walking.  
He doesn't give ultimatums, or threats.  
He simply stands there, rejected and without thanks.

Why?  
Why doesn't Jesus do something about it?  
Why doesn't He run after them and demand their thanks?

Well, it's because Jesus' mercy and healing is a gift.  
 And gifts don't come with strings attached, or ultimatums, or coercion.  
 Gifts are free and undeserved.  
 They're spontaneous, over and above, and entirely for the sake of the other.

Jesus healed these 10 lepers for their sake alone.  
 Leprosy is ugly—repulsive, even—  
     not only to the leper, but also to the other who has to look at it.  
 So if you're a leper, you're out:  
     no work, no community, no temple, no forgiveness, no joy.

But Jesus wants for these 10 lepers joy, forgiveness, temple, community, and work.  
 And He wants it all *for them*, not for Himself.  
 This healing was a gift—no strings attached.

But when only one came back, Jesus was disappointed.  
 Not because He demands worship or thanksgiving as most power-hungry tyrants,  
     but because the gift He gave didn't make its way to their heart—  
         it stuck to the surface—  
             they didn't receive it with faith.

Too often we reject the gifts Christ freely gives.  
 They remain on the surface.  
 The heart rejects them.  
 The mind couldn't care less.

And we do ourselves a great disservice by lowering the standard.  
 It's not okay to be baptized and then not be in Church every Sunday.  
 It's not okay to receive the body and blood of Jesus and still be angry with your spouse.  
 It's not okay to hear that Christ forgives you, and not bring that forgiveness to your home.

It's not okay. It's not enough.  
 In fact, it's sin.  
 For everything that does not proceed from faith is sin.  
 And a lack of thanksgiving, a lack of love, a lack of desire to fall down before this Christ,  
     all flows from unbelief.

Jesus says to the one Samaritan who returned and worshipped,  
     "*Rise and go—your faith has saved you.*" (17:19)

All were healed.  
 One was saved.

So it is with this world.  
 All are healed—that is, Christ has died *for all!*  
 He left no one out; He overlooked no leprosy of sin; He had mercy on all!

And yet, not all turn back with a great cry,  
 not all glorify God,  
 not all fall on their face before the feet of Jesus,  
 not all give thanks to Him.

It's not because the gift hasn't been given.  
 Or that the Baptism didn't take.  
 Or that the Supper was ineffective.  
 Or that the Absolution was muddled.  
 It's because unbelieving hearts reject the gift.

And this unbelief saddens Christ.

However, Jesus neither forces the worship and praise of these nine,  
 nor does simply sulk in His rejection.

Instead, He causes St. Luke to record this story for our learning:  
 that we may repent of our un-thankfulness.  
 that we may hear how faith responds to the gifts He freely gives.  
 that we may rejoice with thanksgiving and worship, falling down just as the Samaritan!  
 and ultimately, that believing in Him, we too might be saved.

The story of the Lepers proclaims Christ's undeserved mercy given out to all;  
 and how faith receives with thankful praise and worship,  
 and how unbelief leaves the gifts at the surface, thinking that's *enough*.

Let us never settle for *that's enough*.  
 Let us not be grateful for little, but for much!  
 Let us spur one another on to recognize the gifts He gives and the salvation He offers.

And let us come again and again to this place where Christ tells His story,  
 where He Baptizes,  
 where He feeds with His life-giving Body and Blood,  
 and where He gives His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

*For these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.  
 And that by believing, you might have life in His name. (Jn 20:31)*

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