

Message for Sunday, October 12, 2025

Title: What's the Point?

Scripture: Luke 17: 11-19

Welcome

Announcements

Giving Options-online, in the back, QR code, etc. Special Offering for the month of October is World Communion Sunday (video); Church Conference TODAY at 11:15AM. Stephanie K has some announcements about ANGELS ATTIC sale; Pastor Appreciation Month; Maybe something about the play structure getting a touch up... your call.

Fellowship of Love

Song

Call to Worship

L: People of Faith, come and see what God has done!

P: God has guided us and walked with us.

L: See how God has protected us.

P: God has brought us to this sacred space.

L: Let us give glory to God!

P: Let us sing praises to God!

Unison Prayer

Holy One, we gather to sing your praises!

We are grateful for the gift of this day and all the ways you make your presence known.

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We are grateful for your abiding Spirit and the ways the Spirit empowers us to be your people.

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In this time of worship, deepen our faith.

Restore our souls and heal us.

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After we have spent time with you, return us to our community,

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that we may share your love and grace with everyone we meet.

In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

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Offering Lead In

L: As we come to this time of offering, let us remember that giving is an opportunity to respond to God's generosity with our own.

Offering/Song

Scripture: Luke 17:11-19 NRSVue

¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee.

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¹² As he entered a village, ten men with a skin disease approached him. Keeping their distance,

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¹³ they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

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¹⁴ When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean.

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¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice.

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¹⁶ He prostrated himself at Jesus's feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.

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¹⁷ Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? So where are the other nine?"

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¹⁸ Did none of them return to give glory to God except this foreigner?"

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¹⁹ Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

Message: What's the Point?

What is the point of being a Christian? I've been around the church long enough to hear people have a significant number of ideas for what this question means. There are two answers I think you would be more likely to hear. The first maybe something along the lines of "I'm a Christian to be a better person." This is the response you'll hear mostly in mainline denominations, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian and the like. The point of being a Christian is to be a better person and to live life as a better person. Always getting better, being kinder, listening and growing.

The second response is one you might hear in more conservative church settings such as Pentecostal and Baptist denominations. “I’m a Christian because Jesus saved me.” Usually this is coupled with the theological idea that our response to God is one of mental ascent. I choose to be a believer; I was converted because I saw the error of my ways and saw the goodness of the gospel and responded. It has to be said that not one group is completely in one category of response or another. You will find Methodists that talk about how God saved them, and you will find Pentecostals who talk about becoming a better Christian. Like most things in life there isn’t a stark black and white comparison. Instead, faith is a complex mixture of belief and practice, in traditional theological terms this is called orthodoxy, right belief, or orthopraxis, how we put that belief into action.

The passage we stepped into today is a dangerous one in the church. It’s dangerous because we have a tendency to not look at it from a healthy angle, we will put a spin on it that does not have to conform to our view of the world. It is a story of healing and of faith. I have spoken many times about the issues of faith and healing, I have even talked about the issues of healing, wholeness, and health. These subjects are very complex subjects that we like to refine into slogans not realizing that those slogans can exclude people.

First thing I want to do with this passage is to be clear about what we are going to ignore. We are going to ignore the fact that these men have a skin disease, some translations say leprosy. The issue is not their ailment; their ailment is a fact of their life. The issue is they are separated from the community by that illness. We don’t deal with leprosy today, so when we fixate on the disease in the text we live unaware of the stigmas we put on people who do not have leprosy. For instance, many of you would recognize leprosy, a skin ailment, but how many of you would recognize a young person who “cuts” themselves? This is a daily concern and interaction I have at school. These young persons may not cry out for healing, because the healing they need is replaced by shame placed on them.

We are also going to ignore Jesus’ statement at the end of this passage “get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.” As much as I hate to admit it, this passage has been so warped by church culture to equate physical wholeness or health to faith that it has become almost useless. It should be obvious that I do not say this lightly. I do believe Jesus is teaching us something important and we are going to get to that; it is just we have to acknowledge that the words have been twisted so much that they end up hurting instead of helping. Let me put this another way, do you think I did not pray enough or have enough faith in God to allow my children to not be born with hearing loss? Do you see what I mean, it is not a helpful passage the way we have tended to interpret it.

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So, if we are excluding these things what then are we going to focus on? Allow me to take you back to the beginning of our message today. The question is one of the balance between orthodoxy (right belief) and orthopraxis (right action). Jesus commands the people with leprosy to go and show themselves to the priest because they are healed. All of them did the right belief. This passage is not an indictment against those that go to the priest, this is what they were commanded to do. They had the right belief, and they were healed because of it. Only one though, has right practice, the Samaritan.

Just like in other places I could go on about the Samaritan being an outsider, I could go on about how Jesus talks about him and why all that is important, and it is. However, it is not more important than the point of the story. You see the Samaritan was the only one to do the right thing, he turned around and praised God.

C.S. Lewis, beloved author and theologian, claimed that praise is inner health made audible. It is not that believing the right thing led to the right practice, it is that both grow from one another. This passage is a reminder to us that the point of the Christian life is not to be a better person, and it is not to be saved, but to live the proper response to God which is praise. The hallmark of the Christian life is not holiness, it is not salvation, it is not piety, again all of those things are important. Instead, the Christian life is one defined by praise to God.

Now I'm good with arguments. I've seen plenty of people use this idea to view praise as one of only two things in the Christian life. One is praising God because God saved you and the other is praising God because worship feels good. Again, these are important aspects, but it is not the faith that made this Samaritan well. The faith, the completeness of the Samaritan in this passage comes from gratitude and thankfulness.

Catholic mystic and theologian Meister Eckhart puts it this way "if the only prayer you can ever say in your entire life is "Thank you" it will be enough." When was the last time you were thankful for God. Not for what God has done for you, but for all that God has given you. It's easy to thank someone for doing something for you, it's harder to thank someone for just being who they are. I would like to suggest that this passage wants us to make gratitude a basic hallmark of our faith. At the end of your life, when people search for a good thing to say about you a testament to your faith will be that you were a thankful person. Gratitude is a sign of our inner health; it is a sign of relying on God and of being who God has called us to be. Amen.

**Pastoral Prayer/The Lord's Prayer
Song**

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Benediction

Song

Goodbye

Remember to come back for the church conference (or hang around)