

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Nov 12th 2014

Two weeks from tomorrow, here in the United States, we will be celebrating Thanksgiving Day. It was originally a day of giving thanks to God for the abundance of God's goodness for giving the land and fruitfulness to our early Puritan founders. Now-a-days we give thanks to and for our families and friends. The reason for mentioning this is that today's Gospel Reading is often used, or misused for that Thanksgiving liturgy. So now that I've gotten that off my chin, what is the grace offered to us in Luke's account of an unusual event.

Leprosy had no borders, nor did Jesus. In Luke's Gospel Jesus' public life is a travelogue moving ever up toward Jerusalem and his final cleansing act of redemption. Ten lepers, at least one of whom is from the cross-the-line country and land of Samaria arrest Jesus' progress. This man's illness rather than Jewish faith made him a companion to the other nine, probably Jews themselves. Jesus and his happy band of brothers are an early version of a traveling road-show. Their healing-successes are well known in the area and of a sudden, the road-show is passing by. So their condition of exclusion and apparent sinful impurity moves them to cry out for healing. The foreigner probably doesn't know exactly the proper words to be using, but he takes up the chant and sees Jesus stop to listen. Jesus does not cure them on the spot, but sends them all to show themselves to the proper authorities.

In the Book of Leviticus it is all stated clearly about how those experiencing the leprosy of skin, or clothing, or walls in the house, are to show themselves to the Jewish religious leaders as proof for their being cleansed. After various practices those who are clean are permitted back into the camps and villages. On the way, all ten are made clean and the nine Jewish men continue doing what Jesus asked them to do. The stranger to these practices goes back to the source of his healing and comes to the feet of Jesus. In the Gospels, many find healing and comfort at the feet of Jesus, a good place apparently.

When Jesus asks the man about where the nine were, the fellow doesn't have to reply. He assumes Jesus knows they went as faithful Jews to complete their religious practices. The Samaritan doesn't know anything about that, only he knows that this person and not perfect legal ritualizing has healed him. He is grateful for being healed, probably secondarily to Jesus for healing him.

There are some important aspects of Luke's forming an image of Jesus for his Greek-Gospel readers. Jesus is gentle, kind, available and non-territorial with his message and healing. Jesus is the completion of God's saving covenants with the Jews. Happy every-day of thanks to the Finder makes this a good Thanksgiving liturgy. Jesus completes the Holy Law and the proper religious practice is to come to his knees, not to beg and grovel, but receive, recognize, and then stand up and get on with extending that same gentleness, kindness and healing welcome to all cross-border people, whatever the boarder may be.

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