

Words Matter!

Luke 17:11 – 19 & Timothy 2:8 - 15

Our Gospel story today is about the healing of ten Lepers. Leprosy is a disease caused by uncleanliness which causes an infection with a bacteria named mycobacterium leprae. Leprosy mainly affects the skin, eyes, nose and nerves. A Leper will lose fingers and toes as the disease progresses. In the time of Jesus, lepers would normally be removed from society by sent on a ship to an island in the Meditterian Sea called 'Leper's Island'.

In our story today, while on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border of Samaria and Galilee, and he went into a village where he encounters ten Lepers. The ten lepers stood at a distance from Jesus and they shout out to him – *Jesus, Master, have pity on us!*

Jesus saw them and had pity on them and Jesus said – *Go and show yourselves to the priests.*

And they did but as they went to the priests, they were cleansed. One of them who saw he was healed, came back to Jesus and praised God in a loud voice! This healed man threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. This man was a Samaritan.

Jesus asked him – *Were not ten people healed? Where are the other nine? Is the only one returning to praise God the foreigner?* Then Jesus said – *Rise up and go; your faith has made you well!*

There is an old saying – *Familiarity breeds contempt!* We gather for worship week to week singing often the similar songs, hearing the same announcements, and hearing a message. It is no wonder after a while that we might not even notice God's healing work among us!

Luke's passage gives us a LOT of material for a sermon. I have always been curious about this so called foreigner who returned to Jesus. We are often very hard toward the nine that do not return to Jesus, but maybe they did not realize that they had been healed? Or maybe they expected it since it is what Jesus was known to do?

I think the foreigner returned because he was caught by surprise because as he ran away with the others, he realized that he had no priest to go to!

Have you always been curious about this so called foreigner who returned to Jesus? Do you have hard feelings toward the nine that do not return to Jesus?

And who do you relate to in the story – the one who returned or the nine that did not return? Maybe you do not believe that you can be healed? Or maybe you expect it since you call yourself a follower of Jesus Christ?

I think we are often like the nine that did not return to Jesus. Some healing takes place in our lives but we fail to recognize who has healed us!

I have lost count of the number of battles I have been involved in over words. Words matter! I truly believe words matter! How about you?

I also know that in a community, words matter and they have the power to unite or to divide. Think of all the words you have heard recently within our nation; are those words there to unite us or divide us?

The church seems to be a fertile place for battles over words. We often tear each other apart with our words. We often easily dismiss each other words.

Definitely our political system is a fertile place to battle over words. We tear our nation apart with our words. We easily dismiss each other words.

The letter that Paul writes to Timothy reminds us that we need to be more attentive to our words. We need to make sure that as teachers and preachers of God's Word, we need to model the proper and life giving use of words to build up, to heal, and to make peace in our communities!

Yes, my friends, the purpose of our words should be to build up, not tear down! Yes, my friends, the purpose of our words should be to heal, not harm! Yes, my friends, the purpose of our words should be to make peace, not to incite riots!

This week we have the opportunity to remind all people we have contact with that we are gifted in ways to serve God and our neighbors. We need to us this time up to Tuesday's election to remind each other that we are one nation under God and chose our words wisely so that they build up, heal, and make peace in our nation.

Each of us have unique gifts and each of us are called to use our words and our vote to build up our nation, heal our nation, and make peace within our nation. And we might just discover some practical ways to grow in our gifts of words and to use them in ways that honor God.

Use your words wisely and use your vote wisely!

Let us pray:

O God, may the healing power of Jesus surprise us during this time of great division within our nation. May we become aware of our unique gifts each of us have to use our words to build up, to heal, and make peace.

Guide us, O Lord, so that this time of great division we may find unity. May the presence of the Holy Spirit empower us to heal our nation.

May our lives be abundant and may we not be like the nine who did not return to praise him. May we always recognize the healing that Christ has given us. Bless us O God who is our Father, and our Son, and our Holy Spirit – AMEN.