**Sermon 10-12-2025**

Have you ever felt unclean? Don’t be embarrassed, it happens to the best of us. After a stressful time of watching the news (which I rarely do these days), I admit that sometimes I feel unclean. You know… because when I watch the news I get frustrated as I start to believe that no one can remember the important life lessons we were taught in kindergarten… It seems that the world has forgotten to:

1. Share

2. Play fair

3. Don't hit people

4. CLEAN UP YOUR OWN MESS

5. Don't take things that aren't yours

6. Say you're SORRY when you HURT somebody

7. Keep your hands to yourself

8. Use kind words

When I see influential people on the news forgetting how to behave as well as a kindergartner, it upsets me… a lot… and if I watch the news when I’m either tired or crabby or both, I just may say things to the TV screen that do NOT include pastoral blessings (if you catch my drift…)

Some may say that venting in this way is healthy. It’s a release of frustrations that doesn’t harm anyone else. But, trying to hold myself to the standards Jesus set for us, throwing insults at the TV screen does make me feel unclean. (I surely can’t imagine Jesus cussing out the TV, can you?)

But, sometimes I do, and it makes me feel “unclean”, and that’s when I break out a fresh pack of “Soul Clean”! This handy dandy product will clean your soul and bring you a fresh, new outlook on the world! 😀 Available at Dollar General!

[Look at package] Oh no. I’ve made a terrible mistake… This says “Sole Clean” for your shoes, not “Soul Clean” for my soul! Well, now what do I do? Cleaning my shoes isn’t going to bring me the restoration I was hoping for after behaving so non-kindergartenly.

Luckily, we have the blessing of confessing our sins to God and receiving forgiveness from them to rely upon instead of going about it on our own with some discount store product. Confession and repentance are great blessings for those of us who mess up. (Which by the way, is all of us.)

Our Gospel lesson today tells us just how easily some leperous men were cleansed from their ailment and what they did about it. To better understand how healing these men made them “clean”, we need to remember what is instructed in Leviticus 13 of those with leprosy or skin sores: 45 “Anyone with such a defiling disease must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face [Note: the invention of Personal Protective Equipment!] and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ 46 As long as they have the disease they remain unclean. They must live alone; they must live outside the camp.

It was a humiliating way to live. They had to be removed from their homes and live on the outskirts of town. If they were lucky, there was another leper from that town to keep them company. If they were even luckier, they had family members who would bring them an occasional change of clothes and daily meals.

It would have been those family members who shared with them the news about a healer traveling through the region named Jesus whose followers referred to as “Master”. Knowing this was their ONLY chance to ever be cured from the torment of their afflictions, they kept their eyes open for hope on the horizon.

And then one day, Jesus approached their village! In their excitement, the group of ten lepers did NOT shout their warnings of “Unclean! Unclean!” but instead called out, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” …and He did.

Jesus gave them the simple instruction to show themselves to the priests, (who by the way, according to the book of Leviticus were the only ones who could declare them to be clean). As they went to locate the priests, their bodies were healed and any sign of their afflictions had vanished!

Nine of them continued on their way to be examined by the priests, but one of them, whom we are told was a Samaritan, was unable to contain his praise for the blessing he had just received and he returned to Jesus in order to fall at His feet and give thanks. We are told at the beginning of today’s reading that this village was in a region on the border of Gentile and Samaritan lands, and we are reminded that Gentiles and Samaritans didn’t have the same beliefs and didn’t therefore get along.

As a Samaritan, this man was the least likely to express faith in a traveling Gentile preacher, but not being able to deny the cleansing that had just happened to him, the restored Samaritan man found himself at the feet of Christ, being commended for his expression of thanksgiving and faith.

When Jesus commented on how he had healed all ten of the men but only this one returned to give thanks, He sounds a bit off-put. The nine men on their way to show the priests their clean and healthy skin were following Jesus’ instructions, but the Samaritan man, knowing that the priests will always be available to examine him, but this traveling Gentile preacher and healer might never return again, so this could be his only chance to worship him and offer him the praise that he deserves.

This is a poignant reminder for us in our busy and chaotic lives. Even though several of us are facing health issues, we have still been very blessed as well, and giving thanks for those blessings is what can keep our eyes open to hope on the horizon.

As an example of hope on the horizon locally, short while ago, the Dodge County Sheriff’s Department held a charity softball game to support a local family going through a season of struggle. Unfortunately, during the game, Officer Joe Salazar ruptured his Achilles tendon. Joe is now recovering from surgery and his rehabilitation will not be complete until next Summer. Upon hearing of his long recovery time, his fellow officers took up a collection to help Joe and his family with upcoming bills. Joe is deeply grateful and touched by the generous hearts of his brothers and sisters of the Sheriff’s Department, so he reached out to give thanks for their help.

The good folks of the Sheriff’s Department didn’t have to participate in a charity softball game or chip in to help Joe with his bills, but they have compassion for those in need and feel a call to serve. Jesus didn’t have to heal the ten lepers or commend the Samaritan man for his bountiful faith, but he also felt compassion for them as their need was very great.

Jesus calls us all to serve and also calls us to give thanks and praise not only for those big, remarkable blessings, but also for those everyday blessings that are too numerable to count. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the way you have blessed each one of us with your love and compassion. Amen.