

18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Proper 23, Year C  
A Sermon Preached by The Rev Ian M Delinger  
on October 12, 2025

2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15c / Psalm 111 / 2 Timothy 2:8-15 / Luke 17:11-19

*We who dwell in the shelter of the Most High,  
abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Amen.*

With both the OT and the Gospel being about receiving healthcare, I could very easily preach on the current Government shutdown ... but I won't! But I *will* point out that no one in today's readings was turned away from receiving healthcare, not even Naaman or the Samaritan leper, both of whom were foreigners.

This morning I would like to play that old game of "*Who are you in the story?*". And I want us to play that game with both the OT and the Gospel. Both stories are about healing and gratitude. So, let's have a look at the characters:

- *Naaman is a mighty warrior of Aram who just won a war. As mighty as he is, he suffers from leprosy (probably psoriasis).*
- *Naaman's servant has a small, but significant, speaking role in the story.*
- *Elisha is an Israelite prophet who has the power to heal human ailments.*
- *Then there are 9 lepers who are healed and forget to say "Thank you."*
- *The 1 Samaritan leper who is healed and shows gratitude.*
- *Jesus, the Healer.*

Reflecting on these characters and which one you might be at this moment is a great exercise because these 6 different characters represent society, they represent communities, they represent organizations, and they even represent families. Each one is someone you know and engage with.

Naaman is probably the character no one wants to admit to identifying with. His arrogance and entitlement are more than off-putting. Sure, there will be some who come to his defense citing his status, but I don't buy that, and neither does

Elisha. He demands to be healed, but he wants to be healed on *his* terms, even though he came to the healer.

Naaman's servant is the friend every powerful person needs: the one person who will call out your BS and you trust him enough that he gets away with it. Our tendency is to surround ourselves with "yes men and women", those who will always support our way of thinking and doing things. But you need both to truly be successful. And you need *this* guy to keep you humble.

Elisha is pretty cool in this story – he doesn't even come outside to meet Naaman; he sends his servant. He's not intimidated by power and authority. He has his own, and he has YHWH. He is confident in his role and in his abilities. He's like Dr Fauci during the pandemic.

Then in the Gospel, the 9 lepers go merrily on their way. It's like the successive generational conflicts in society: each generation complains that the next generation doesn't have any manners. I must admit, I stopped giving my now-adult nieces and nephews birthday and Christmas presents because, not only did they never send a thank you card, they didn't even *say* thank you.

The Samaritan leper is different. My LA-now-Boston niece is a bit like him. She would say "thank you" for a rock I found at Avila Beach and wrapped in tissue paper, and she would find the joy that the rock represents! And as a vocal teacher, she would praise God with a loud voice and with song!

There is another character in these stories: *a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife.*

*She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."*

This seemingly insignificant child, a prisoner of war, was the key to fixing the greatest warrior's biggest problem. Without her tip, Naaman would have continued to suffer.

The Bible, when you look at it as a whole, from the birds-eye view, is a story of the seemingly insignificant as God's agents. These characters – some named, some unnamed – can teach us a lot about gratitude and humility.

And then there is Jesus! He's a bit miffed! And He takes it out on the leper who returned. Today, we call that "*preaching to the choir*"! Poor guy!

But Jesus brings all of our readings and the Psalm together with His words to the Samaritan leper: *Your faith has made you well.*

This short sentence doesn't capture the depth of what Jesus and the leper know about faith. For Jesus, *faith* is not something you own, it's not a tool in your life kit. It is intrinsic to your very being: your faith is to be *lived*, not just practiced. In saying these words to the Samaritan leper, and to the many other people Jesus says it to, Jesus and the leper know that it was more than just the knowledge that Jesus could heal him of his disease. That's what the other 9 lepers knew. They knew of Jesus' reputation; if you don't ask, you don't get; they ask; they're healed; their off. The Samaritan leper is not only healed of his disease, his soul is healed, and his relationship with God has deepened because he now has this new relationship with Jesus.

So, let's go back to who you are in these stories. If these stories are about *faith* rather than *healing*, does that alter how you see yourself in these stories? Perhaps Elisha is indifferent to the powerful Naaman, not because of his confidence in his own skills, but because he knows that it is *YHWH* who gives him the power to heal, and he is simply living his faith that comes with this particular charism.

Naaman, once healed, has a new relationship with YHWH:

*Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel.*

With a faith that is lived comes gratitude. For us, our living faith begins at our Baptism when we are given a new, healing and saving relationship with Jesus. In this new relationship with Jesus, we receive God's grace:

*God's favor toward us, unearned and undeserved.  
By grace God forgives our sins, enlightens our minds, stirs our hearts,  
and strengthens our wills.*

We are not entitled to God's grace, yet God gives Divine Grace freely. And so, we respond to that through prayer and worship:

*Responding to God through our thought and by deeds.  
And by coming together here today to acknowledge the holiness of  
God,  
to hear God's Word, to offer prayer, and to celebrate the sacraments.*

And this is where the gratitude of the Samaritan leper points to what we come here for every Sunday.

*He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him.*

εὐχαριστῶν: *giving thanks*. It is the word we use for celebrating communion, the Holy Eucharist, our Great Thanksgiving. If you look on p361 of the BCP, you will see that the heading is "*The Great Thanksgiving*". The Eucharist is our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. It is our living faith by which we express our gratitude for that grace so freely given, yet so undeserved. It is our living faith by which

*the sacrifice of Christ is made present, and in which He unites us to  
His one offering of Himself.*

A living faith is not one of duty; it is one of εὐχαριστῶν: *giving thanks*. And we should do that with joy, praising God with a loud voice!: *O for a thousand tongues*

*to sing!* It is our living faith that makes us truly and deeply healed, not just superficially, but healed in body, mind and spirit. As we recited in the Psalm:

*Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart!*

We need to learn how to live that every day!

So, how do we learn to live our faith? From whom do you learn humility and gratitude? Do you learn from the bad behavior of Naaman or from the rebuke of his servant? Do you learn from the praise and thanksgiving of the Samaritan leper or from the 9 who couldn't be bothered? Do you learn from the dismissiveness of Elisha who holds his ground and doesn't quiver under the threats of a mighty warrior or from Jesus' indignance at the lack of even a "thank you"?

Or do you learn through your own experience of God's grace? The grace that God freely gives you at the moments you are feeling like any of those characters, when your sins are forgiven, your mind is enlightened, your heart is stirred and your will strengthened.