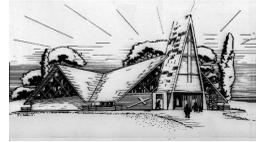




Free Evangelical Lutheran  
Synod in South Africa

## Sermon - 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 23C)

Jesus, God in the flesh, heals us from  
the worst kind of spiritual leprosy!



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Luke 17, 11-19:

- **ESV** **11** And it came to pass while journeying to Jerusalem, and He was passing through the middle of Samaria and Galilee.
- **12** And when He was entering into a certain village, ten leprous men met Him, who stood some distance away,
- **13** and they raised their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”
- **14** And seeing them, he said to them, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.”
- And it happened that while they were going away, they were cleansed.
- **15** But one of them, seeing that he was healed, returned, glorifying God with a great voice,
- **16** and he fell on his face at his feet, giving thanks to him. And he was a Samaritan.
- **17** And Jesus, answering, said, “Were not the ten cleansed? The nine—where are they?”
- **18** Were there found none returning in order to give glory to God except this foreigner?”
- **19** And He said to him, “Arise, journey; your faith has saved you.”
- *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts to see the kingdom present now amongst us! Amen.*

• **Dear Congregation in Christ!**

- Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to make the one ultimate sacrifice all people need to be cleansed before God! On this way, Jesus cleansed and healed ten lepers. They were asking for mercy from Him- they had probably heard that Jesus had cleansed a leper before [5,14]. Jesus commanded them to go and show themselves to the priests. Which they did and as they went they were healed.
- Now comes the surprise: One of them turned around, and it says, [15b] *“praising God with a loud voice”!* And then even more remarkable, [16] *“and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him.”* The “Him” is Jesus! That is, this man, this Samaritan, gave thanks to Jesus as God! He realised who Jesus really was! He couldn’t walk away. He had to thank Jesus! There was God standing in person. Instead of giving thanks to God in the

temple he came to Jesus' Body!

• He didn't go to the fore-shadow, the temple in Jerusalem, He came to God in person, Christ Jesus! This was a Samaritan, the one of whom one would least expect such theological insight! That is why Jesus asked: *"Were not the ten cleansed? The nine—where are they?"* We see, the emphasis is on the where are they? Why didn't they come to the same conclusion as the Samaritan?

• Now, why did Jesus sent them to the priests in the first place? In Chapter 5,14 we hear Jesus saying the following to a cleansed leper: *"go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them."* So, Jesus sent them to the priests, to show to them, that He really healed them! The priests were experts in determining if someone was cleansed of leprosy.

• *In brackets: (What we see here is, Jesus is not afraid or against using the institutions in society which can verify a real miracle healing. It would be of great help if all those who claim to be faith-healers of our day would follow Jesus in this. Why not work together with medical staff? Send the person who has been healed to his or her medical doctor to confirm the healing. "Faith-healers" who turn their patients against medical science are not following Jesus!) Close the brackets.*

• Jesus was not against Moses. In fact, He, God Himself, commanded Moses to command that cleansed lepers should show themselves to the priests [Lev 14,1-2]! However, Moses is not the fulfilment of the Scriptures! Cleansing people from leprosy and all sicknesses is part of Jesus' earthly ministry, but this is not the end of the road! Jesus is still on His Way! That is why He commanded the cleansed Samaritan to rise and journey. He should not stay there. He was cleansed to follow Jesus! To see and realise the fulfilment of Jesus' ministry he needed to get up and follow Jesus to Jerusalem. There he would be able to witness the one ultimate sacrifice which would cleanse all unclean sinners before God!

• Leprosy is curable by medicine these days. If Jesus was only about curing diseases He would have been outdated for our times. Not that medicine that works to heal us should not be seen as a gift from God. When some

illness or pain has been healed in our bodies by medicine it is still God who should get all honour. He allowed people to make those discoveries. Any healing points to God's Grace. He is the Healer even if He does it through science and medical personnel. He always deserves our gratitude!

- So, we have to look deeper, we have to rise and carry on walking with Jesus to Calvary. At the cross of Christ we realise, we learn, the physical leprosy points to a leprosy of the heart! Our hearts are unclean and it shows in that we often live a life of being ungrateful.
- If things are not going precisely our way, in this corrupt world- how can we ever expect things to run smoothly in the first place- we turn sour and fail to see the reign of Christ amongst us! We get stuck in the incompetence of the institutions and we fail to return to Christ and praise God with a loud voice for giving us salvation!
- Our sinful thoughts of hatred and deep seated ungratefulness are like leprosy in God's eyes. These make us unclean! Leprosy is contagious by contact. That is why the lepers were excluded from the community so that it could not spread to all!
- In the same way what we desire and think against God and against our neighbours contaminates our whole inner being and when it leaves our mouth a whole society is infected in the worst way! And the root cause of this deadly spiritual virus is our unbelief. We get all infected with this old Adam virus if we forget or fail to realise that the kingdom of God is amongst us in, with and through Christ's Word!
- Jesus is the kingdom of God who has come right amongst us! He is the new temple of God for us!
- In the Body of Jesus, where His Word and means of Grace are handed out, is the right place to receive deep cleansing of our hearts, of our deepest desires, thinking and emotions.
- And this deep-cleansing by the Word of Jesus lets us realise again, here is God, here is the presence of God in Christ! The forces of darkness make a big noise and they seem to rule and seem to even ruin the plan of salvation of God, but that is not the truth. The worse it gets out there in

the world, the closer it is to its decreed end! The new kingdom of God is alive and already amongst us! He has already conquered the evil foe and all his might! He conquered sin, the death and satan. This is just their final hours of trying to deceive as many as possible into their chaotic kingdom.

• And so our eyes are opened again and we see clearly that there is no need to panic and to engage in stupid, foolish, hatred and other revolutionary activities. If we have to suffer, then we will rather suffer and take up our cross, daily, and follow Jesus, than fight with a revolutionary activism which works straight into the hands of evil forces!

• So, if you have been infected by the leprosy of ungratefulness, impatience, hatred and desiring to fight the world with a revolutionary spirit of activism and you cry out with the lepers, Lord have mercy on us, then hear the Word of Christ: Your sins are forgiven! Jesus cleanses you today! He washes you clean and gives you a new beginning, a new start today! Arise and follow Jesus. Take up your cross and follow Him praising God!

• Soon, very soon the kingdom of God will be revealed to all. On the Last Day the Son of Man will come again in such a way that all people of all times will know it at once. There is no secret visible coming of Jesus before the Day of Resurrection. Don't be deceived by the doctrines of seemingly pious men!

• But, through faith in the Word, we know where to find God, namely in the Body of Jesus where Christ's Word reigns, where it cleanses and heals and hands out Salvation in true reality. Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

• *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. **Amen.** (<sup>ESV</sup> Eph 3,20-21).*