

OCTOBER 9, 2022
18TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

“Gratitude”



St. John United Church of Christ
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Rev. Rosemary Captain

Organist – Sharon Banjavcic
Choir Director – Nancy Eisenhauer
Liturgy - Rev. Maren Tirabassi

***CALL TO WORSHIP:**

Come and hear what God has done –
God has listened to all our prayer.

When we pass through the torrent of deep troubles,
God turns the sea to dry land.

When we are tangled in the web-nets of life,
God does not let our feet slip.

When we are tested as silver is tried,
God keeps us in the land of the living.

When we go through fire and water,
God brings us to a spacious place.

Come and hear what God has done –
God surrounds us with steadfast love.

***INVOCATION:** (Luke)

Gracious God, we come this morning to seek our own
faith – the faith that makes us whole;
We come to express our common faith –
the faith that brings us joy;
We come to give thanks for faith –
The faith that is a gift from you;
We come to share the faith of others and offer with
love our faith to them. Receive us into worship with
your welcome of grace. Amen.

***INVITATION TO CONFESSION:**

God stirs our conscience into restlessness and heals
our very hearts. Let us confess our sins.

***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION: Holy God, we
confess that sometimes we are not grateful – to**

people who have cared for us, loved us, and helped us, to those who have gone before to give us faith and future, to our own bodies for their resilient and patient support.

We confess that sometimes we are thankful in our hearts but too negligent or hesitant to express our thanks aloud.

We confess that sometimes we lavish appreciation on others from a feeling of personal unworthiness and doubt of our own wholeness. Heart-healer, Conscience-troubler God, accept our repentance and plant in us a deep root of gratitude. Amen.

***ASSURANCE OF GRACE:** Our return to God is a sign of the healing that already has taken place within us. God forgives us all our sins; thanks be to God.

FIRST TESTAMENT READING: 2 Kings 5:1-15c

5 Naaman, a general for the king of Aram, was a great man and highly regarded by his master, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. This man was a mighty warrior, but he had a skin disease.^[a] **2** Now Aramean raiding parties had gone out and captured a young girl from the land of Israel. She served Naaman's wife.

3 She said to her mistress, "I wish that my master could come before the prophet who lives in Samaria.

He would cure him of his skin disease." So Naaman went and told his master what the young girl from the land of Israel had said.

5 Then Aram's king said, "Go ahead. I will send a letter to Israel's king."

So Naaman left. He took along ten kikkars of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. **6** He brought the letter to Israel's king. It read, "Along with this letter I'm sending you my servant Naaman so you can cure him of his skin disease."

7 When the king of Israel read the letter, he ripped his clothes. He said, "What? Am I God to hand out death and life? But this king writes me, asking me to cure someone of his skin disease! You must realize that he wants to start a fight with me."

8 When Elisha the man of God heard that Israel's king had ripped his clothes, he sent word to the king: "Why did you rip your clothes? Let the man come to me. Then he'll know that there's a prophet in Israel."

9 Naaman arrived with his horses and chariots. He stopped at the door of Elisha's house. **10** Elisha sent out a messenger who said, "Go and wash seven times in the Jordan River. Then your skin will be restored and become clean."

11 But Naaman went away in anger. He said, "I thought for sure that he'd come out, stand and call

on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the bad spot, and cure the skin disease. ¹² Aren't the rivers in Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than all Israel's waters? Couldn't I wash in them and get clean?" So he turned away and proceeded to leave in anger.

¹³ Naaman's servants came up to him and spoke to him: "Our father, if the prophet had told you to do something difficult, wouldn't you have done it? All he said to you was, 'Wash and become clean.'" ¹⁴ So Naaman went down and bathed in the Jordan seven times, just as the man of God had said. His skin was restored like that of a young boy, and he became clean.

¹⁵ He returned to the man of God with all his attendants. He came and stood before Elisha, saying, "Now I know for certain that there's no God anywhere on earth except in Israel. Please accept a gift from your servant."

EPISTLE READING: 2 Timothy 2:8-15

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, who was raised from the dead and descended from David. This is my good news. ⁹ This is the reason I'm suffering to the point that I'm in prison like a common criminal. But God's word cannot be imprisoned. ¹⁰ This is why I endure everything for the sake of those who are chosen by

God so that they too may experience salvation in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. ¹¹ This saying is reliable:

"If we have died together, we will also live together.

¹² If we endure, we will also rule together.

If we deny him, he will also deny us.

¹³ If we are disloyal, he stays faithful"

because he can't be anything else than what he is.

Speak, instruct, and act correctly

¹⁴ Remind them of these things and warn them in the sight of God not to engage in battles over words that aren't helpful and only destroy those who hear them. ¹⁵ Make an effort to present yourself to God as a tried-and-true worker, who doesn't need to be ashamed but is one who interprets the message of truth correctly.

***GOSPEL: Luke 17:11-19**

Jesus heals a Samaritan

¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he entered a village, ten men with skin diseases approached him. Keeping their distance from him, ¹³ they raised their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, show us mercy!"

¹⁴ When Jesus saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." As they left, they were cleansed. ¹⁵ One of them, when he saw that he had been healed, returned and praised God with a loud

voice. ¹⁶ He fell on his face at Jesus' feet and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Weren't ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" ¹⁸ No one returned to praise God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ Then Jesus said to him, "Get up and go. Your faith has healed you."

***RESPONSE:** The ancient words revealed to us anew.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: "Who gets healed? Who is thankful?"

Looking at our Gospel story today, I am tempted to analyze the heck out of it. For example, when Jesus asks where the other nine went, he should remember that he told them to go to the priests to show them they are healed. The nine that went were Jews and they knew the requirements to have their healing verified by the priests so they could return to their family and to the synagogue. The tenth person was not Jewish and thus "outside the rituals of Judaism"; he was a Samaritan, and had no such requirement so he didn't run away. But if I got snarky like that I would miss the whole message of the story.

Several times in our scriptures, the word Samaritan was mentioned. Who were the Samaritans? The Samaritans in Jesus' day began as a race of people

in the Old Testament, formed after the Assyrian King took most of the nation of Israel into exile. He repopulated what was then Israel's capital city, Samaria, with foreigners who eventually intermarried with the Jews who remained in the land. As a result, their offspring was only half Jewish. These half-Jews became known as Samaritans. They were considered a different race than the Jews.

That's why the gratitude of the Samaritan is so amazing. He didn't need to thank Jesus, but he did. Just like Naaman who was also a foreigner, he didn't have to thank the prophet Elisha, but after his arrogance and stubbornness, he did. He did big time.

¹⁵ He returned to the man of God with all his attendants. He came and stood before Elisha, saying, "Now I know for certain that there's no God anywhere on earth except in Israel. Please accept a gift from your servant."

And the tenth leper did the same thing. His healing occurred in his act of obedient faith. He is healed. He is saved. It is the foreigner who praises God and gives thanks to Jesus. It is the foreigner to whom Jesus says, "Your faith has made you well." Clearly, the expression "made you well" refers to some blessing other than the cleansing from leprosy that has been given to all, including those who did

not give thanks and who did not praise God. That additional blessing we usually term “salvation.” There are several lessons we can learn from these stories. First of all, it seems to me that when people of no faith are in devastating circumstances and they ask for help from God; when they receive that help they are especially grateful. They really didn’t expect it since they weren’t church people. They saw with their own eyes what God could do. Whereas some church people ask God for blessings all the time and they expect to receive them; after all isn’t that what God does? And when they receive blessings do they say things like, “Now I know for certain that there’s no God anywhere on earth except in Israel.” Or like the tenth leper who returned and praised God with a loud voice, and fell on his face at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. He realized that God has healed him. He became a believer just like Naaman.

When we read Acts when the apostles were starting new churches and preaching for belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Jews did not run to join. The saying goes, “the faith of foreigners and the blindness of Israel.” Gentiles joined the new churches when the Jews turned away.

Do we think God should heal everyone, even those of a different race or foreigners?

Do we take God for granted? Do we pray for thankfulness and gratitude just as hard as we prayed for help? We may be knocked to our knees in times of perils, but do we return to our knees in thanksgiving? Something to think about. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER: Beginning with a time for silent personal prayer.

Eternal God, fill all of the churches in the world with your presence, that it may be the light of the world, radiant with the grace of your son, Jesus Christ. We pray that all people would see a different way to live; one with hope and love instead of hate and racism. We are all God’s children no matter what we look like.

God of all time and places, you sent Jesus of Nazareth to show your loving presence in places of sickness, sorrow, and shame, to bring healing, comfort, and dignity. We are grateful for all experiences in which we encounter you. We praise your holy name.

We pray for all the helpers to those affected by the storms and hurricanes of last week; the firemen, the rescuers, the medical staff, the helicopter pilots, the police, the heavy equipment operators who are clearing away the debris and homes which have become debris. Give them all hope that as difficult as

it is to rebuild, the result will be buildings and homes where they will be safe and where they can thank God for helping them.

Bless all of family and friends, and those on our prayer list. Relieve their pain. Comfort their grieving. Give them hope that tomorrow will be better. Hear us as we pray together . . .

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

Luke tells us that Jesus healed ten lepers but only one returned to give thanks and that one was a foreigner. Again and again in the Bible the unlikely one in the story becomes the model of a generosity and grace. Maybe today, we are the ones God is hoping will return to give thanks and praise. May we offer our best in joyful response to the gift of our lives that this mission of healing may continue to spread throughout the world.

***UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION:**

Holy One, in Jesus Christ you have shown what your heart is like – merciful and abounding in steadfast love. Form that same spirit in us that our lives may become continual prayers of thanksgiving. Let no cry of your creation go unheard. Form us as agents of practical praise, molding us with mercy for a world crying out for healing.

***BENEDICTION:** Go, my friends, because the mercy of God has freed you from your past. Go, because the mercy of God calls you forward into the world. Go, because the blessing of mercy you offer to others will lighten the burden they are carrying. Go, because by this mercy of God, we are all healed again and again. Thanks be to God! Amen and Amen!

***BENEDICTION RESPONSE:**

“Let There Be Peace on Earth”

PRAYER LIST: Urban Baum, David Seneczyn, Warren Neff, Carol White, Cheri Schutzenhofer, Theo Mally, Jane Reiss, Sandy Fort, Becky Ballard, Rosemary Williams, Ginny Ganschietz.