

“Get up and Go”
10/10/10

Text: Luke 17:11-19

What do you see? What do you hear in this gospel reading today? Oh...at one level we can moralize this story and see ten people healed by Jesus...and then only one of the ten being thankful for his healing. And so...we can say simply...this account reminds us that we ought to be a thankful people for all God has done and does.

Will we be like the nine...or...will we be like the one? This will preach, won't it? It has preached and it does. We ought always to be thankful to God—for God's love...for God's provisions...for God's care and constant presence. We ought to be thankful for all we have...for all we can do...for all we are. Simply...just to be here today...to have opened our eyes earlier...to have stretched out our arms...to have planted our feet on the ground and now to be where we sit in this moment...for all of this—*and some*—we ought to give thanks.

Are you thankful today for what you have...however little or much it may be?

But you see...I think there is a deeper message here in Luke 17 for us to hear and to see...and yes, a deeper message about giving thanks and praise to God. There is a message here for all of us this morning...a message that perhaps is intended to give us perspective and to offer us a challenge.

You see...this story is more about the *one* than about the nine...I don't think Luke or Jesus intended to malign the nine, for in fact, they did exactly as they were instructed...they followed Jesus' instructions to the tee...and these directives that Jesus gave were not his alone...they came straight from the Torah...from the Book of Leviticus...so if we're tempted to use these nine lepers as an example of unappreciative individuals...we're probably wrongly perpetuating a false description of these marginalized people.

And heaven knows...marginalized people are marginalized enough.

Jesus here liberates the marginalized—all ten of them—it just so happened that one of the ten was doubly marginalized because the accent of his tongue and the place of his birth happened to be different than the rest.

But...in order to appreciate fully the significance of what I think Luke's gospel intends by telling this story...we've got to take a step back and view this story in light of the context that surrounds it. We've got to look at the words that come before and after it...and I think...it's good to note that this account of these lepers falls in *between* some challenges and reality.

It begins...

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee...

This story takes place *between* extremes.

Geographically, this account unfolds between two regions which experienced prejudice and racism. Samaritans and Galileans were not to interact with each other and yet here in Luke 17 we find Galilean lepers and a Samaritan leper being healed together.

Literarily, the story of the healing of these lepers falls *between* Jesus' words of overwhelming challenge...

Woe to anyone who causes a child to stumble, we'd be better to have a weight tied around our neck and thrown into the sea...

And then right after this episode of the lepers we hear Jesus' words describe the reality of suffering and rejection that he—the son of man—must soon face.

Smack dab in *between* Jesus' words of challenge and reality...Luke gives us this story of the lepers and particularly, this story of the Samaritan leper—this doubly marginalized person—who had every right to be disgruntled and unhappy, who had every reason to be disenchanted and jaded, who could have wallowed in misery—and yet while this leper was caught and trapped *between* challenges and realities...

The ways of God's love and healing moved. And further...this Samaritan acknowledged God's ways and expressed thankfulness for all that was coming to be.

When we're caught *between* life's challenges and realities...whatever they may be...and from wherever they come...what are we seeing...what are we hearing?

Chances are God is at work. God's way of love and mercy is near. Are we looking? Are we seeing? Are we like these lepers saying, "Lord, have mercy."

I wonder if Luke's gospel wants to remind us that no matter what we're between today—and in truth, when living life, don't we always live in the *between*? We live always between challenge and reality. We've acknowledge today the extremes of life—the birth of a child and the death of a loved one.

In the *between* may we see daily the evidence of God's grace and the footprints of God's mercies. For they are here. And when this evidence is seen...let us like this leper be thankful and may God grant us the courage to get up and go. Amen.