

Pentecost 18 10/12/25
 Luke 17:11-19 23C

Gospel reading from the 17th chapter of Luke's Gospel

And as He entered a village, He was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us"

That's what the Evangelist Luke tells us these ten lepers cried out to Jesus. But, what is interesting to note is what they do **not** cry out to Jesus.

Think about it for a minute – you know about leprosy. It was a horrible skin disease. It disfigured the human body. It was terminal; there was no cure for it. And maybe, just maybe, the worst part of it all for someone living with the dreaded disease – it made you an outcast, isolated from family and friends and loved ones, cut off from society, with only fellow lepers to keep company with. And that meant that lepers, to warn people they may encounter, would have to shout, "Unclean! Unclean!," to caution people to stay away from them. And, there was nothing – absolutely nothing -- they could do about their condition.

But, no, they did **not** cry out, "Unclean," as would be expected of a leper. Rather, they cry for mercy to Jesus. WHEN THE GOING GOT TOUGH, WHEN THEY WERE ABSOLUTELY HELPLESS, WHEN LIFE WAS NO ROSE GARDEN, THEY FLED TO THE MERCY OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST.

I. I call that to your attention because, as so often happens in earthly life, leprosy comes your way. No, no, not a dreadful, terminal disease that disfigures your body. But a leprosy in the form of the form of sickness, depression, the death of a loved one, a fight/quarrel with some you love, a

child that just breaks your heart. Something goes wrong. And then comes the time you ask: why is this happening? And you have no idea. It just happened.

Maybe, just maybe, it's a leprosy of you own making. You've sinned in your thoughts, words, or deeds. You did what was right in your own eyes, and now you have to live with the consequences. The going got tough, and you reached for the whiskey bottle and the words that flew from your mouth caused great wounds. That secret affair to make you feel better about yourself, is not such a secret any more. You gossiped, cut down your neighbor -- and oh how easy it is with social media -- just so you could feel better about yourself. After all, it's **always** about you. Maybe you went shopping and bought yourself all kinds of new toys just to keep up with the Jones'; more stuff you really didn't need, and now you're up to your eyeballs in debt and sinking fast. You just wandered off and now you are alone, like a lost little lamb in the valley shadow of death.

"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" That's what those ten lepers cried in their helplessness. Scripture tells us, *Faith comes from hearing, hearing through the word of Christ (Ro 10:17)*. Clearly, the good news about Jesus had reached their ears and that hearing produced hope, confidence, faith that made them believe what they had heard about Jesus and His mercy, maybe even towards other lepers, to be true. And so, they sought His mercy. Notice that they didn't ask Jesus to cleanse them, or for food for that day, but only that He would have mercy on them. They didn't deserve any favor or reward from Him, they desired only mercy.

And show mercy, the Merciful One did! The Merciful One gave them an abundance of mercy. According to the Old Testament law, a leper would normally show himself to the priest only after he had been healed of

the disease. But Jesus told them to go before they had been healed. Implicit in this command was a promise. By sending them to the priests, Jesus was telling them that they were already clean in His eyes. By going, they had already received what they'd asked for -- the Master's mercy.

II. Oh My Friends, the Good News of the Gospel lesson is that the Merciful One does not treat us as our sins deserve. Yes, we deserve only His temporal and eternal punishment. But, God has an abundance of mercy upon us in Jesus.

Yes, our sin made us outcasts, separated from God and enemies of one another; isolated in our self-centeredness and selfishness. We were unclean, and there was nothing we could do to make ourselves clean before God or to rescue ourselves from its sentence of death. So, God had mercy upon us. His mercy caused Him to send His only-begotten Son into this world, born of virgin mother. He took upon His perfect body all of our sin, so that He became the Unclean One before His Father in heaven.

Isaiah the Prophet says it like this,

Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows...
But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all (53:4-6).

For us and for our salvation, the Merciful One suffered the ultimate separation from God, when the Father abandoned Him to the death of the cross, to suffer and die for our sin, so that we would be cleansed of all our sin, so that we would never be separated from God again.

III. In the death and desperation of our sin, we cry, *“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”* That’s because we’ve heard about Jesus. His mercy. His love. His kindness. His goodness. His patience. His forgiveness. Everything we’ve heard about Jesus is true. His is our Immanuel, our God with us.

And the Merciful One says to you, “I forgive you all your sins. Rise and go your way; your faith has saved you.” *“Take heart, My son, My daughter; your sins are forgiven” (Mt 9:2). “Take, eat; this is My body...Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt 26:26-28). “I am with you always, to the end of the age (Mt 28:20). “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (He 13:5).*

Notice the words of our Epistle,

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus... Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus ... An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.

Using the example from earthly life of a soldier fulfilling his duty, an athlete competing for a prize, and a farmer who patiently plants his crops, Paul teaches us about living the Christian life. No, it is not a rose garden. It is a struggle, it is a life of suffering, Paul teaches us. But in His mercy, God strengthens you with His grace, so that you may walk by faith; deny yourself and take up your cross and follow Him; that you may be like the soldier, the athlete, the farmer.

Because Jesus hears and answers our cry for mercy, we have confidence and the comfort to say,

*“If we have died with Him, we will also live with Him;
If we endure, we will also reign with Him;
If we are faithless, He remains faithful”.*

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.