

Worship Service “*Perspective*”

Pentecost 18, Year C, 9th October, 2022

2 Kings 5:1-3,7-15c CEV / Luke 17:11-19 NSRV

Prelude

Opening Music (Lyric video) [*The Deeper River*](#) written by Digby Hannah,
posted to YouTube by Kevin Templestowe

Welcome Guests / Announcements

Pass the Peace

Opening Hymn *Holy Spirit, Come With Power* **26**

Call to Worship [responsive]

One: Those who do the will of God are Christ’s mother and sister and brothers,

All: There are no outcasts in the family of God.

One: For all of you are one in Christ Jesus our Lord,

All: There are no borders, no dividing walls in the kingdom of God.

One: For there will be a great multitude that no one can count,

All: From every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages.

All: Of all ages and abilities, every one of us made in God’s image;

All: We are loved. We belong. We are the whole people of God.

Invocation

We draw near to You, the Living God. Who sits upon a throne high and exalted
Who comes low through the person of the Lord Jesus. Who continually comes
alongside to empower, encourage and enable. We draw near to You, the Living God
Who makes bent roads straight for us Who lifts our heads through sorrow and
sadness. We draw near to You, the Living God
Who saw us in our poverty and despair Who acted in love and mercy to heal and
forgive us. We draw near to You, the Living God Who loves to draw near to us Who
wants us to know as we’re known, with a heart of love and compassion. Amen.

First Testament Reading (Video) [**2 Kings 5:1-3,7-15c CEV**](#)

2 Kings 5:1-3,7-15c, Naaman Is Cleansed A weekly bible reading, from the lectionary, narrated by Douglas Brown. Text from CEV : the Contemporary English Version Copyright © 1991, 1992, 1995 by American Bible Society. Used by Permission. Pictures from commons.wikimedia.org

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy.

Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken 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."

When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel."

So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house.

Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean."

But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy!

Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage.

But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?"

So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel.

A Time of Prayer

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Ever-present God you meet us in the borderlands, in places neither here nor there, at times when we are well out of our comfort zone; even if we don't know where we're going, when we feel most lost, you are there.

You meet each of us where we are, and many of us in our need, people marginalized by illness, not wanting to be a burden, those who see their poverty or problems as unacceptable – feeling rejected – with faltering self-worth. It was in the borderlands that Jesus met a band of lepers, whose livelihood was begging, whose status was untouchable, and touched their lives with hope. And it was the Samaritan, the one most of all an outsider, who turned back to give thanks. We thank you for all we can learn from our sisters and brothers who live on the edge, in poverty, in the borderlands: about gratitude, grace and healing hope.

Lord Jesus, as you healed the ten lepers between Galilee and Samaria, we pray that you would heal those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit. We thank you God. Amen

Hymn

For the Healing of the Nations

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Gospel Lesson: Luke 17:11-19 NSRV

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

As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean.

Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice.

He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.

Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?"

Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"

Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

Message - *Perspective*



When you look at this picture, what do you see? A lot of us probably see a young woman wearing a fancy hat, with her head turned. Yet if you look a little closer, you can also see a much older woman with a prominent jaw and nose, also wearing an elaborate hat.

I share this picture this morning to illustrate that our perspective, how we look at things, can affect what we actually see. Often if we look closer, we see something entirely different than our initial impression at a casual glance. This illustration is an intentional illusion, but how often in our real lives do our own points of view affect not only how we see something, but even how we remember something.

There have been so many occasions in my own life where I reminisce with someone about an event we attended together years prior, and I'm amazed at how much my memory of what transpired differs from their recollection. We all view what we encounter in life from our own point of view, and it can affect which details we notice, and which ones avoid our radar.

Both of our lessons this morning present different themes of perspective. In our first story, Namen travels to receive healing remotely from the prophet Elisha while in our gospel lesson, Jesus heals ten lepers who are standing far away from him and all others. In both cases, the victims suffer from leprosy. Leprosy in the ancient world included a number of skin diseases that were determined to make one "unclean." As such, you were forced to stay away from other people, and they were forced to stay away from you. For you to come into contact with someone who was not infected would be to make them ritually unclean as well.

So if you found yourself in this circumstance, you would be outcast from society, forced to live at the margins, outside of cities and towns, with no means to earn a living. You would depend on the charity of others whom you couldn't even get close to actually receive the handout directly. Food might be left at the city gate; coins may be tossed in your direction. The only way out was to be healed and have that healing verified by a priest, then ritually bathe and make the appropriate sacrifice. Yet the odds were still potentially stacked against you.

The person making said judgment was not a physician or trained in any way in the recognition or treatment of disease. You were left to the whim of the clergy, who in that day were not always known for their scruples. Yet in both stories, the main character suffering from this affliction is a Gentile, not even one of the chosen to whom all these rules apply.

They already have a strike against them by being Gentiles. Yet both are acknowledged and healed by God regardless.

Both Elisha and Jesus see past the distance others would put between themselves and these men. When they heard or saw them, they didn't put them at a distance; they didn't assign them to a category as "unclean leper: and simply dismiss their need. They saw them as individuals: individuals with real needs and real pain. They both provided relief for that pain. And what was the ultimate result? Gratitude. Plain and simple. They both rejoiced in the power of God to heal them, but more importantly, to provide salvation.

In our gospel story, Jesus tells the Samaritan man that his faith has made him *well*. Yet the Greek word used here can also mean salvation. So not only has his faith healed him, but it has saved him. It's also interesting that in our second story, the only one of the ten healed that turns to express gratitude is the Samaritan, one who is already an outcast. The presumption is the other nine are Jews, who head off to the priest to get their clean bill of health, and rejoin the "clean" club and become part of society again. Their gain is likely immediate and substantial. They can retake their place in commerce and culture. Yet they don't even cast a backwards glance. Whereas our Samaritan friend falls to his face at Jesus' feet in a grand display of gratitude.

So what is our perspective? Are we farsighted? When we see the outcasts of our time, do we look at them from a distance, put them in the appropriate category of stereotype, and go about our daily business? There are plenty of modern day lepers to choose from: the homeless, the drug addict, the refugee or immigrant, the transgender, the person of color, the list goes on and on.

Do we see the category or do we see the individual? Like the characters in our stories today, we have all been "made well," saved by grace. How do we share that grace with others? Do we show our gratitude or do we simply take the gift and go back to our normal lives, like the nine in our gospel story today? Being grateful is at the heart of God's hope and intent for each of us. There is evidence that Jesus knew exactly what he was talking about.

In 2006, there was a Web launch by the website WebMD called "Boost Your Health with a Dose of Gratitude." The essay cited thousands of years of philosophical and religious teachings urging gratitude and then cited new evidence that grateful people, for whom gratitude is a permanent trait, have a health edge. It may be that grateful people take better care of themselves, but there is evidence that gratitude alone is a stress reducer, that grateful people are more hopeful, and that there are links between gratitude and the immune system. Being grateful makes you healthier and gives you a better quality of physical health.

So how do we inspire that gratitude in others, and ourselves? Well, sticking to the theme today, it all comes down to perspective doesn't it? We can choose to be short-sighted, only focus on our own problems, and keep the suffering of others at a safe distance, separated

from us, outside the walls. We can pine for a better health and life and wallow in our own self-pity. Or we can be grateful for the many blessings we have.

We can see those on the margins, those who are the outcasts of today, as individuals in need of blessings to be grateful for, in need of being “made well.” The question is, are we willing to reach out and go from being farsighted to seeing them close-up, as equally beautiful creations of the same God who made us?

If Jesus can reach out and change the life of the lowest of the least of these of his time, surely we can adjust our focus to seek to change the lives of the outcasts of our world. Surely we can share the graceful, or “grace-filled” gratitude we have with those who yearn for the change that grace can cause. We choose what perspective we use the view the world. I pray we choose the one that sees the face of Jesus in everyone, because there are no outcasts in his kin-dom. Amen.

A Call to Serve

Most Gracious God, You provide for us in ways that we do not always recognize. In this moment, we pause to express our gratitude for your provisions. We accept this invitation to offer our gifts as an opportunity to say thank you for your many blessings.

A Time for Reflection - *Musical Interlude*

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Accept these gifts as evidence of our desire to participate with you in the care of your beloved. These gifts symbolize our thanksgiving for all that you provide. Through these gifts we praise you, O God. Amen.

Hymn

God of Grace and God of Glory

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BENEDICTION

God’s steadfast love endures forever, and never fails us. God’s love renews and restores us. When we love others, we feel God’s love in us. When we care for others, God cares for us. When we show compassion to others, we remember God’s mercy for us. You are loved. You are cared for. You are forgiven and restored. Go and share the good news with one another. Amen.

Postlude