

XIV TRINITY 2015

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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GALATIANS 5.16 St. LUKE 17.11



Actions speak louder than words...an often-used idiomatic expression...we might even say overused...but one that is true. Actions do speak louder than words!

Today's Gospel is about words and actions. Ten men ask Jesus to heal them of a skin condition. Jesus heals them. The surprise element in the story is only one came back to Jesus...to say thank you! What happened to the other nine?

We don't know for certain what "dreaded skin disease" afflicted the ten men. It may very well have been Hansen's disease. Any sort of visible skin condition was seen as potentially contagious. The men would have been ostracized from the community and forced to live apart from their friends and family.

The ten men keep their distance from Jesus. "Please make us well again", they ask. Jesus doesn't lay his hands on them or say they are healed. He tells them to do exactly what the Book of Leviticus instructs them to do. He tells them to go and let the priests examine them. Only the priests could certify they were cured of their skin condition. While they were on their way to see the priests all ten men were healed.

Only one man came back to thank Jesus for healing him. He was a Samaritan...the type of person respectable people would least expect to do the right thing. He is so overcome with emotion he falls down at Jesus' feet and thanked him. Where were the other nine men? The Gospel tells us they were all healed...why did they not come back to thank Jesus? Actions do speak louder than words.

We spend much of our time in prayer...often asking God for help or guidance...at work...at home...at school...at church. Prayer is not an incantation designed to get God's attention and make him perform a magic act. It is an act of Faith...and all prayers get answered...yes...no or wait awhile. We should also remember to thank God for his many blessings no matter how great or small we think they are.

Jesus wants to see in us the same kind of Faith the Samaritan showed when he asked for help. Jesus wants us to believe that he can and will help us every day of our lives. He wants us to put our trust in him and to know God our Father is a loving Father who wants what's best for us.

What God wants is for us to enjoy life to the fullest now and get ready for what he promises for us later...life everlasting in heaven with him. The Collect is the perfect prayer about getting ready for his promise by making a commitment to always say and do the right thing.

Our Faith leads us into taking actions...and our actions must always be done out of love. The Collect echoes what Saint Paul says in his Letter to the Corinthians...the greatest gifts God has given us are Faith, Hope and Love. Our constant prayer is these gifts will be increased in our lives every day.

Jesus wants us to know God is always ready to forgive us because it's his nature to show mercy and compassion. Jesus shows us how much the Father loves us through his own acts of love and compassion. He cares about our physical and spiritual health and everything we do in our daily lives whether it's work, school, church, or vacation time to get refreshed. And nothing is unimportant to God.

Ten men with a skin condition came to Jesus for help. They were at their wits end. They were all healed. Only one man came back to thank Jesus for curing him. Today we have treatments available for people who have Hansen's disease and other skin conditions. Those treatments are no less miraculous healings than Jesus telling ten men to go and let the priests examine them. God works through science too.

Actions do speak louder than words! What we say often reflects what we feel in our hearts. Our hearts must be focused on God's great gifts of Faith, Hope and Love...so those are not just gifts we talk about...they are gifts we put into action.

And let's remember to say to God...thank you!

