

XIV Trinity 2024
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
St. Luke 17.11-19



Only one man came back. What about the other nine?

The Book of Leviticus records God's instructions to Moses concerning skin diseases (13.1-46) and purification after having skin diseases (14.1-32).

Any person with a rash or other skin condition had to go see the priest, who would examine the person and determine if the condition was contagious or not. The Greek word translated as *leprosy* in the King James and as *dreaded skin disease* in the Good News refers to any rash or skin condition.

The ten men in today's Gospel may or may not have had Hansen's disease. It was indeed a dreaded and feared skin condition. There was no cure. The person who had Hansen's disease received a life sentence away from his family, friends and the religious life of the community. He was exiled until the day he died.

In this morning's Gospel, Jesus and his friends are on their way to Jerusalem. They are traveling through Galilee and are approaching a small village near the border with Samaria. The Ten men with the dreaded skin disease ask Jesus for help. They keep their distance and shouted so they could be heard, "Jesus! Master! Have pity on us!"

Jesus told them to go show themselves to the priest and let him examine them. According to the Book of Exodus, only the priest could declare the men free of the dreaded skin disease and able to return to their families and friends and community.

Jesus could just as easily have said, "You are all healed. Now go home." But he first demanded a show of faith from the ten men. Did they actually believe he could do something for them? Did they actually think he could heal them?

The ten men did what Jesus told them to do; they went to see the priest. The Gospel tells us on the way they were healed of the dreaded skin that had afflicted them. We don't know how far they traveled when they

discovered they had been healed. The priest would still have had to confirm they were clean of the dreaded skin disease. Only one man came back to thank Jesus and praise God for healing him. And he was a Samaritan.

What about the other nine men? The Gospel doesn't tell us if they were Jews or Samaritans. Jews and Samaritans despised each other. But anyone with a contagious skin condition would have had no one to turn to for support, except for other people with the same disease.

We don't know what happened to the other nine men. What did they do when they found out they were healed? Who did they think healed them? Jesus makes a point of asking where the other nine men were and why hadn't they returned to give thanks to God. But he says the other nine were, in fact, healed.

What we learn from the healing of the ten men and especially from the one man who returned to Jesus to praise God, is that God heals in accordance with his wishes and at the time he chooses. The Samaritan in the Gospel was blessed by God with both physical and spiritual healing. Jesus told him to get up, his faith had made him whole.

We ask God for help or guidance all the time...at work...at home...at school...at church. We ask God for healing for ourselves and for others. Like the ten men with the dreaded skin disease, God demands we show a sign of faith. Our individual and corporate prayers are demonstrations of our faith. They are expressions of our belief God hears and answers our prayers...and God always answers our prayers: yes...no...or wait awhile.

God 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. We're always ready to ask God for things. We need to remember to thank him for the miracles we experience every day.

God likes it when we come back and say "Thank you!"

