

## Christ for the World

Luke 17: 11-19

*<sup>11</sup> On the way to Jerusalem Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup> As he entered a village, ten men with a skin disease approached him. Keeping their distance, <sup>13</sup> they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" <sup>14</sup> When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. <sup>15</sup> Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. <sup>16</sup> He prostrated himself at Jesus's<sup>[b]</sup> feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup> Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? So where are the other nine? <sup>18</sup> Did none of them return to give glory to God except this foreigner?" <sup>19</sup> Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."*

We have spent several Sundays considering the idea of Metanoia: the changing of one's mind or way of thinking and being.

Today, we focus on how Jesus himself undergoes such a change.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke, he is approached by a Centurion,  
A commander of the occupying army,  
who believes Jesus can heal his servant  
from afar and begs him to do so.  
*Never have I seen this faith in all Israel,* says Jesus.

In our story today, in Luke 17,  
Jesus has healed a group of persons with leprosy,  
from different backgrounds,  
and he is amazed  
that a **Samaritan**, whom even Jesus knows  
as a social and religious outcast  
is the only one of the healed  
who turns back to thank Jesus  
and praise God.

In the next verses, a woman, from Syrophenicia  
therefore an outsider, a foreigner,  
begs for healing for her daughter,  
and when Jesus initially rejects her plea  
saying he is *called to the children of Israel*  
*not to the "dogs,"*  
but she persists, Jesus is moved  
by her faith, and heals her child.

Jesus lived his whole life between Nazareth and Galilee,  
Bethlehem and Jerusalem, a region of about 100 miles.  
And we see in these stories how startling it is for him  
that those who were different from his tribe:  
different language, religion, experience,  
have more faith than his own.

Jesus himself is undergoing *metanoia*  
a change of mind, right in front of us.  
This is evident a chapter later,  
When he is asked, *who does the Torah say*

*is our neighbor,*  
And he describes how the faithful of Israel  
pass by a beaten man,  
and it is a **Samaritan** who shows compassion.

Jesus sees the signs of God's loving power  
present in the world, the culture outside his own,  
present in those who aren't within the fold.  
and he invites those who follow him  
into the same awareness,  
opening to what God is revealing to them  
within them,  
to a journey of *metanoia*.

I traveling in China , decades ago,  
just a few years after the country was opened up  
after decades of isolation.  
I was on my own, and grateful when  
two young men befriended me when I got off the train  
in Guiling,  
I was the first American they'd ever met.  
they knew some English  
and walked with me  
through the town,  
and they helped me find lodging.

One of them shared his story of his family's  
struggles under the new cultural revolution,

They wanted to show me the sights, particularly

an ancient holy shrine,  
which they had never visited, and we  
walked up the steep steps together

One of my companions was particularly curious about the place,  
He's never been taught about any faith  
of any kind.

We were in the gardens near the top,  
and he said, in almost a whisper.

*Sometimes, when I see poor people  
I say "Oh God, help those poor people."  
and sometimes when I see something beautiful  
like a flower, I say;  
"Oh God..."*

*Do you think that is prayer?* He asked me?

This young man, with no religious training  
was responding to something from within  
and from outside of him,  
right in the midst of life,  
awakening him to a deeper life.

I heard this week the voice of a young Russian man,  
who was called up two weeks ago to fight in Ukraine.  
He'd argued with his mother recently  
She supports their president,  
He told her, *No, mother, it is all untrue,*  
We are bringing harm to these people.

She told him she was ashamed of him,  
and he left for the nearest border  
20 hours away.

The Russian soldiers at the borders called him a coward  
one who would leave his own mother.

he said, *I am not afraid to die in war,  
but I would rather die  
than kill an innocent person.*

This young man, of no evident religious faith,  
was responding to a call of God,  
the call of the Christ,  
awakening him to  
a wholeness of being  
and a deeper life.

Jesus, who lived his years,  
in constant growth, in completely openness  
to the Work of God in him,  
would undergo the greatest of metanoia,

When those who killed him rather than themselves change,  
Jesus of Nazareth died but rose in death in Christ.

Christ who, John says, was in the beginning with God.  
Christ who is available and accessible to all,  
regardless of creed or country or sect,  
or any religiosity at all.

Christ, the way, truth and life.  
by which we can all know God

For did we not see Christ carrying strangers  
to safety this past week in the typhoon?

Do we not see the hurting Christ in that  
young man refusing to kill his sisters and brothers  
and leaving all behind to follow the call within?

And as those who go by the name of Christian,  
surely it we who must learn to recognize Christ's face  
all around us,  
to see Christ in the face of love  
no matter who is offering it,  
and in the face of suffering  
no matter who is weeping.

This World Communion Sunday  
let us remember that Christ  
is in communion with the whole world.

Let us turn around, and give thanks  
for the Christ who lives and lives in us,  
healing us, changing us,  
Blessed be the name of the Lord.  
Amen.

Surely the Christ is In communion with him.  
He all who died, and all who are traumatized by the  
devastation of the hurricane.

So, what if we aren't special.  
I like what ETTY HILLESUM says:

"I don't want to be anything special.  
I only want to try to be true to that in me  
which seeks to fulfill its promise."

Is not that it.  
When we can see the Christ in others  
in a perfect day,  
in a service, as imperfect as this one is,  
in the bread that we've baked,  
in the neighbor helping neighbor  
regardless of creed.

Just as the Samaritan man was invited, by his healing,  
Just as those residents of Ft. Meyer  
helping one another,  
Just as ETTY HILLESUM

Etty Hillesum was a Jew living in the Netherlands  
when she was forced into a transit camp  
awaiting deportation to Auschwitz,

She has been rather less engaged with the world  
but then was surrounded by barbed wire,  
illness, hunger, children weeping for their mothers.

But rather than anger toward the perpetrators  
she felt called to go deeper,

*"All disaster stems from us. Why is there a war?  
Perhaps because now and then I might be inclined to snap at my  
neighbor. Because I and my neighbor and everyone else do not  
have enough love. Yet we could fight war by releasing, each day,  
the love that is shackled inside us, and giving it a chance to live*

*"I know and share the many sorrows a human being can  
experience, but I do not cling to them; they pass through me, like  
life itself, as a broad eternal stream...and life continues..."*

*My life is one long, harkening unto myself  
unto others, and unto God.*

A Samaritan of all people—the foreigner, the social and religious outcast, one who would not be counted under the elected but judged a heretic by most people in his time—epitomizes this kind of godly life and attitude. He demonstrates a faith that lays hold on God, that cannot and will not remain silent in response to what God has done in his life, that publicly, spontaneously, and joyfully directs its thanksgiving to God. Being grateful is not a precondition for being healed by Jesus; all the lepers find themselves

cleaned as they show themselves to the priests. However, the Samaritan turns around and comes back. In Luke, as in the New Testament in general, "turning around" as a description for the believer's reaction to Jesus' work is certainly no accidental action, but filled with deep theological meaning. It describes a movement of the whole person, initiated by God's graceful work, a redirection of orientation toward God. Jesus' words, "Your faith has made you well" (v. 19), refer, therefore, not just to the medical healing the Samaritan has experienced, but to the holistic healing of this human being.

Margit Ernst-Habib, "[Theological Perspective](#)," in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary: Year C*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, vol. 4 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 166.

It is difficult to know what tone Jesus uses as he questions the whereabouts of the other nine. Is he sad? angry? flabbergasted? What he does make clear is that this most unlikely one, this double outcast, has been embraced by grace. "Get up and go," he says, "your faith has made you well."

To practice gratitude intentionally changes an individual life, to be sure. It also changes the character of a congregation

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John M. Buchanan, "[Homiletical Perspective](#)," in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary: Year C*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, vol. 4 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 165.

Kimberly Bracken Long, "[Pastoral Perspective](#)," in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary: Year C*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, vol. 4 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 168.

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