Last week, through the parable of the mustard seed, we learned from the disciples’ request to increase their faith, that even if our faith is as small as a mustard seed, it can still blossom, mature, and bear much fruits for the Kingdom of God, if we only lay our trust into God’s hand and let the Holy Spirit lead and guide us. Even when we may feel lonely and isolated, or buried in the mud, God assured us that He would never abandon us.

Our text this week takes this faith to yet another deeper level. We will examine about the gratitude of our faith and our **rightful response towards such miracle of healing**. Faith is necessary not only for our physical healing but our spiritual healing as well.

How many of you have visited the doctor’s office recently? I don’t know about you, but whenever I accompany my mom to the doctor’s office, it makes me depressing. No one wants to be there but they have no choice. The doctor’s office or the hospital is probably the last place you feel grateful or thankful for. We just wanted to get out of there ASAP.

But sometimes I wonder, how many patients would actually go back to the hospital and thank the doctors or nurses who took care of us, after they have been healed and discharged. I witnessed that most recently when I went to visit someone in the hospital, I saw the family of a patient coming back to the hospital thanking all the doctors and nurses who were taking care of their mother…in gratitude and appreciation. Would even 1 out of 10 come back and thank them for what they have done?

In the Gospel story that we read earlier from Luke, Jesus the physician did more than just a physical healing of leprosy. He did a spiritual one as well. The central focus of our story is not so much about the miracle healing that took place but instead the miracle that came afterward, when these lepers suddenly realized that they had been healed. How did those 10 lepers respond after they had been healed by Jesus. They rejoiced and celebrated…. however, there was one problem…only one of them came back and thanked Jesus for what he did for them. How soon had the other nine quickly forgotten when they were gifted with a new opportunity in life.

But what’s even more intriguing was that the only one who came back was a Samaritan – a Gentile, a foreigner of all people. He was NOT supposed to be the recipient of the gift of salvation and eternal life. Whatever happened to the rest? Now to give them the benefit of the doubt, we don’t know exactly why the other nine did not come back to thank Jesus. Maybe they did later on? Maybe they were too excited to be reunited with their families. There’s a lot that we don’t know. ***“Were not ten made clean? But where were the other nine?”*** Jesus asked.

I think there’s a lot that we can analyze out of this story. **How is God’s grace extended inclusively to ALL people, regardless of their backgrounds, limitations, and imperfections. From a more human level, how can grace and gratitude be so easily forgotten and taken for granted?**

Let’s take a look at each of these a little more closely. Shall we? First off, as we may know, the Gospel writer Luke was a Jewish physician, but he was writing with the Gentile audience in mind. There had been numerous references of physical healings throughout the Gospel of Luke. Luke seemed to be drawing a connection between one’s physical well-being and the spiritual well-being…and how they often correlate with one another.

Contrary to the similar account as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, which was geared more towards a Jewish audience, Luke focused on the inclusion of the Gentiles - the “outsiders”, those who are marginalized, looking in from the outside. This has been the theme throughout this gospel revealing what this new kingdom of God may look like, regardless of one’s race, ethnicities, social-economic, physical backgrounds.

This Samaritan was double marginalized as a leper and as a Gentile. In those days, lepers were considered spiritually uncleaned persons with the possession of some evil spirit. No one would dare come near them, never mind touching one of them. They were to be ostracized from society, locked up and quarantined from making any physical contact with the outside world. Perhaps even their own families were rejecting them as well. Those 10 lepers knew that if there’s anyone who could help them, it would be Jesus.

 One other interesting observation that I notice, was that Jesus never made any physical contact with these lepers. The lepers kept their distance away from Jesus. They knew their place in society while demonstrating their humility and more importantly their faith. They respected one another’s boundary. Despite this invisible social boundary, the miracle of healing and transformation could still take place. Jesus simply spoke his words…and it simply becomes!!! Those 10 lepers demonstrated faith in God, even when others rejected them. Their faith had made them well. There were no doctors, no nurses, and no hospitals…but there were just spoken words from Jesus and heart full of faith from those lepers.

 However, this miraculous healing event was just the tip of an iceberg. Let us not just focus on the healing component of this miracle but more of the greater miracle of God’s over-arching plan of salvation for ALL of humanity…that **God’s grace is extended to ALL people**, not just those who are elite and chosen. YES! Even those who are strangers and foreigners among us as **we are ALL made in God’s image. We are all God’s children and the undeserving recipients of God’s unconditional and lavished grace.**

 The Samaritan leper came looking to be healed physically but he got more than what he came for. He walked away being healed spiritually and socially as well. His testimony, I’m sure, would bear witness to his faith as he was being embraced with an opened arm. But what about the other 9? **They had received grace so lavishly but had forgotten to return the favor and to share that grace with others. They had forgotten to “pay it forward” with their gratitude of faith.**

**Come to think of it, what about us? Do we find ourselves being one of the nine who gets what they wish for, but forgot to come back and express our thanks and gratitude?** Or do we find ourselves countingall of God’s blessings and to give thanks in all circumstances. The Samaritan knew a thing or two about receiving grace, returning grace, and sharing grace with others. Through our story today, we see that ***faith has the power to heal and to save but it is not limited by borders and boundaries, whether those boundaries are geographical, religious, social, or a combination of these.[[1]](#footnote-1)*** God’s healing faith transcends across whose who respond accordingly.

In Paul’s letter to the early church in Thessalonica, he reminded us to ***“****always seek to do good to one another and to ALL. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

As the season of Thanksgiving will soon be upon us, may we once again be reminded of not only to count our blessings but to acknowledge the source of these blessings as well. **May we calculate not only how blessed we are, but offer a time to remember what we must do in order to share God’s blessings with others.** God’s grace is indeed sufficient for all of us to share with others.

 Jesus said, *'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'* ***'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me*.**'[[3]](#footnote-3)

 So therefore, **let us not only count our blessings but BE a blessing to others through our grateful hearts and gratitude towards others. Our faith has surely made us well. Thanks be to God.** In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. Voelz Richard W. *Connections Year C, Volume 3,* p.388 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *I Thessalonian 5:15-18* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Matthew 25:34-36, 40* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)