Last week, through the parable of the mustard seed, we talked about what faith is and what faith isn’t. We talked about how our faith, even as small as a mustard seed, can be blossomed into maturity and bear much fruits for the Kingdom of God, if we entrusted our faith into God’s hand and let the Holy Spirit lead us. Even when we may feel lonely and isolated, when we feel that we are buried in the deep dark soil, we are assured that God has not abandoned us. God still provides the necessary care and nurture through the sunshine, the warmth, and the rain.

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

I’m sure all of us at some point have visited the doctor’s office or have been admitted to the hospital before. Each time we go in, we are faced not only with a great deal of physical pain but also high level of anxiety and fear, not knowing what the prognosis and outcome may be. We fear for the worst while praying for the best. We place our trust and faith in the hands of our doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers. Ultimately we place our faith in God. 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 we were discharged. 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 did more than just a medical healing. He did a spiritual one. The central focus of our story is not so much about the miracle healing that took place but instead the main focus here was what came afterward, when these lepers suddenly realized that they had been healed. How did those 10 lepers respond to Jesus’s healing. They rejoiced and celebrated…. however, there was one problem…only one of them came back. Only one of them came back to thank Jesus for what he did. How soon had the other nine quickly forgotten when they were gifted with a 2nd chance…a new opportunity to start over again.

What’s even more intriguing was that the only one who came back was a Samaritan – a Gentile, an outsider of all people. Whatever happened to the rest? ***“Where not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?”*** Jesus asked. I think there’s a lot that we can analyze out of this story. **How is God’s grace extended to ALL people, not just those who are exclusive and elite,** and **How can God’s grace be so easily forgotten and ignored? And what does that say about our human response towards grace and our attitude towards giving thanks to others?**

 Let’s look at each of these a little more closely. First off, we know that the Gospel of Luke was written by a Jewish physician – with the Gentile audience in mind. If Luke as a physician really wanted to go into the physicality of healing, he could, but that’s not what this story is about**. The bible is not a medical reference book, but rather a spiritual one. The spiritual healing component was far more important than the physical and emotional healing itself. The physical and spiritual healings often go hand-in-hand.**

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) to be the core of the new kingdom regardless of one’s race, ethnicities, social-economic, physical backgrounds.

Of the ten lepers who were healed, only the Samaritan came back to thank Jesus. The Samaritan was double marginalized as a leper and as a Gentile. In those days, lepers were considered spiritually unclean persons with the possession of some evil spirit. No one would dare come near a leper, never mind touching them. They were to be ostracized from society, locked up and quarantined from making any 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.

 Notice that Jesus never made any physical contact with these lepers. He simply spoke the words!!! And these lepers took upon this healing because of their faith. 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 of God’s over-arching plan of salvation for humanity. **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, those who might have been raised in a different culture, spoken another language, eaten different kinds of food, dressed or even smelled differently than what we’re accustomed to. Or perhaps those who are mentally and physically challenged…those whom we might intentionally pass by on the other side of the sidewalk or on the platform.

 **We are ALL God’s children and are 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. He was once again welcomed back into society with an opened arm.

But what about the other 9? They seemed to have forgotten about the one who healed them. **They had received grace so lavishly but had forgotten to return and to share grace with others. What did that say about our attitude towards grace and gratitude with others? Grace and gratitude must go hand-in-hand.**

**How soon have we forgotten what God has done in our everyday lives?** Do we ONLY call upon God when we are in desperate need of some kind of a miracle or a healing touch from a higher power beyond our capabilities.

 Scriptures remind us that we ought to count all 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.

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.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*

 As the season of Thanksgiving will soon be upon us, in about 6 weeks, 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 those who are less fortunate than us.** God’s grace is sufficient for all of us to share with others.

 This week as you know, we’ve witnessed the utter devastation of those who live in the path of the hurricane with severe property damage and human lives loss, especially down in places where the poorest of the poor live, down in Haiti, Cuba and the Dominican Republic. It is through these human tragedies that awaken us that we are all vulnerable individuals who are in need of God’s embrace. We must not look away, presenting it’s out our business, ignoring the human losses and suffering all around us, in our comfort and in our leisure.

Do not be like the other 9 lepers who were healed and never came back to return thanks and gratitude, but be the lonely leper who felt convicted by God’s mercy and grace. We all have a sense of obligation and mission to turn back to extend our gratitude for the one who healed us but more importantly, we must also extend God’s healing, encouragement, love, and support to those who needed more than us**. In times of trials and challenges like these, our human conviction of faith and gratitude are being tested and our outpouring response in sharing God’s blessings are demanded and called upon.**

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*.**'[[2]](#footnote-2)

 So therefore, **Get up and be your way; Homecrest! Let us live a life in response to thanksgiving to God in all circumstances, even in the midst of desperate trials and hopeless measures. Your faith has surely made you well. Now go, and share God’s healing and embrace with others.** In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *I Thessalonian 5:15-18* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Matthew 25:34-36, 40* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)