

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

As the Lord passed between Samaria and Galilee, He was met by ten lepers. The God who spoke and it was took on flesh. And as He traveled through the land that separated Judea from Galilee, He encountered flesh in its most horrible condition – disease ridden, dying flesh. The men stood afar off because leprosy is contagious. They stood afar off because they were unclean. They stood afar off and cried out for mercy. Men could not cure leprosy; no cure was known for their disease. Their only hope was a miracle.

Their despair was evident in their cry. They had been put out of the unnamed village, dwelling on the other side of the main road to protect the village from their disease. They cry out from afar for help, but do not call Him “Lord”. Perhaps they had heard of His miracles. They call Him “Master”, a title that recognized His superiority over them, his command of a power that exceeded theirs, perhaps even supernatural powers.

Their cries for mercy are met with a mysterious response from the Lord. He does not pronounce them clean. He does not say “Be healed”. He says “Go, show yourselves to the priests”, and then the Lord apparently continues traveling into the town. So there they stood, afar off, having cried out for mercy, still leprous, with only the Lord’s Command to do something which for them was impossible.

It was impossible because lepers weren’t admitted into the city, where the Priests were, or into the Synagogue, much less into the Temple where the Priests did their work. And a Samaritan would never have been granted an audience with a Jewish Priest. What the One they called Master commanded was impossible for them.

But the Word that proceeds from His mouther never returns void. It accomplishes what He pleases, it prospers in the thing for which He sends it. Without any other hope, the confused and befuddled men went as commanded. And then the miracle is brought to fruition – as they went, they were healed.

“And so it was, that as they went, they were cleansed”, St. Luke records. Their flesh was restored. Their disease was taken away. One can only imagine their rejoicing, their wonder and bewilderment, as their pain ceased, as their lesions vanished, as their weakened limbs were made strong, as their eyes dimmed by that horrible affliction now saw clearly.

That healing brought those men to a fork in the road, the choice between two paths. The path they were on, the path that led away from the Man they called Master, led to the Priests. The Priests could not heal. They could only pronounce a man clean or unclean. They had no remedy for uncleanness.

To go to the Priests was to tread the path that would carry them back to the Law, the same Law that proclaimed them unclean, but could not heal. Presumably, pronounced clean, they would be readmitted to society and live out their lives until they returned to the dust from which all men are made. The Scripture doesn’t say. St. Luke’s account doesn’t follow the nine. Christ is the center of all Scripture.

There was the path that led to the Priests. But there was another path, another Way, the Way that led back to the Man they called Master. Only one of ten took that path, for so it is with the Kingdom of God. The Way of Salvation is the narrow gate, the path that passes through the eye of the needle, the Way of the Remnant, the small part sundered from the masses, one of nine.

That path, that Way, the Way that Christ alone can open, requires a turning back, a reversal, a complete change of direction. And so one of the men did just that, the least likely of the ten, the one most ceremonially unclean. The nine turned their back on Jesus and headed for the Priests. In their desperation they believed for a moment, but being healed their faith died. But not so the one. He turned his back on the other men, on the village, on the Priests, and he reversed course. And he was a Samaritan.

His leprosy was cured. But he knew he had also received a better healing, a healing that surpasses the earthly and grants the heavenly; a healing that reaches beyond time and grants eternity. So he did what faith always does: he went to Jesus. He went to the Lord, the Lord who alone can truly heal. The One he had called Master he now knew as Savior.

In the Samaritan faith was worked by the Word of God. And that is where St. Luke's account of the ten lepers meets you. For the same Christ saved you. And so we could say this day – "...where are the nine?" Did not our Lord give His life for the life of the world, for all men? Should not these pews be full this day, full of men who return to give thanks to the One who died that they might live, full of men who faithfully draw nigh unto their Savior to receive His Gifts where He has promised to give them?

Should not Bible Study be filled today with those who, in faith, desire to hear and to study the very Word of our Master, the Word that healed and converted the Samaritan?

Repentance is a change in direction. It is a turning back, a turning away from the flesh and its lusts, a turning away from the world, a turning that places one on the Way of Salvation, the path that leads to Jesus. That's what repentance is. It is to confess that you are incurably afflicted with a fatal disease – sin – a disease for which no man holds the cure. It is to cry out from afar for mercy to the One who healed the lepers, and to trust that He can heal you.

And so this day you have turned back, you have repented, you have beaten your breast, and you have returned to the Lord who healed you. He who traveling between Samaria and Galilee encountered human flesh in its most horrible condition took on flesh to save you. He did it by suffering His flesh to be infected by the lesions of the scourge.

He did it by being put outside of Jerusalem, counted as unclean, to hang condemned afar off on the hill called Golgotha, covered in your sin, covered in your death. And although He cried out, no one answered His cry. No one healed Him. No one saved Him.

But He is not dead. Just as He healed the lepers by His own power, so did He take up His life again of His own power. It is He, the risen Christ, who is the Door. It is He who opens to you the Way of Salvation, for He is the Way. He leads you in the Way Solomon calls the "right path", the "path of the just", the path that shines brighter unto the perfect day, the Last Day, the Day on which Christ's Church will be ushered to our heavenly home.

For the Word of the Lord is life to those who find it. So the Apostle writes that if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under Law. You need no priest, for the Lord is your Great High Priest. He made the perfect Sacrifice, the once-for-all Sacrifice of Himself, to reconcile you to God. You have an Advocate with the Father. The Lord Christ has made propiation for your sins. And of that Sacrifice He bids you eat and drink this day, as, led by the Spirit, His Body is your Food and His Blood is your Drink.

So it is you, dear Christian, who are, as the Apostle writes, led by the Spirit, who are no longer under the Law. It is you who have the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And it is to you, you who in faith eat His Body and drink His Blood, that your Master, your Savior, says “your faith has made you well.”

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.