

Luke 17:11-19

Thanksgiving Sunday

October 11, 2020

This passage from Luke is the only one in the entire Bible where someone thanks Jesus for healing them.

But this passage is not about saying thank you.

It is about the nature of faith.

Earlier in this chapter, the disciples ask for enough faith to forgive someone seven times a day. Jesus' response suggests they have misunderstood the nature of faith.

So what is faith?

Ten men with leprosy ask Jesus for mercy. He tells them, "Go and show yourselves to the priest." Only the priest could certify that they were cured and able to rejoin society. But one turns back, thanks Jesus, and praises God. After wondering out loud where the other nine are, Jesus says, "Your faith has made you well." Jesus can't mean that his faith has cured his leprosy, because the other nine were cured as well. Something more has happened, and it must have something to do with his coming back and praising God. The Greek word Luke uses is *sozo*. Most of the time when this word occurs in Luke, it's translated "saved," as in, "Your faith has saved you."

All ten were cured; this one was also made well. Medical literature sometimes distinguishes between cure and healing. Curing is fixing a disease or disorder in the physical body; healing is bringing wellbeing to the whole physical-emotional-spiritual being, which sometimes does not involve a physical cure. If you can bring someone peace, they can be healed without being cured. All ten were cured; this one was also healed.

The other nine saw the physical change in their bodies and continued on their way to the priest.

The tenth one saw the physical change in his body, and was changed, body, mind, and soul, because he saw the Spirit of God alive and active in the world, and its presence in Jesus Christ. He saw the world, as the poet says, "charged with the glory of God."

The other nine were filled with joy; he was filled with awe.

When you go to the doctor and are healed, do you see the doctor's skill and the chemical-biological work of the medicine? If you also see the resilience and fragility and wonder of life, then you have felt awe. If you eat your holiday turkey and see and feel the rays of the sun and the growth of the plants and the sacrifice of this animal so that you may be nourished and live, you have felt awe.

The awe that leads to gratitude and praise: that is faith.

**Sources:**

Gaiser, Frederick J. "'Your Faith Has Made You Well': Healing and Salvation in Luke 17:12-19." In *Word & World*, Vol XVI, 3, Summer 1996. Luther Seminary: St. Paul, MN.

Kreider, Eugene C. "The Politics of God: The Way to the Cross." In *Word & World*, Vol VI, 4, 1986. Luther Seminary: St. Paul, MN.

Lose, David. "Commentary on Luke 17:11-19." *Working Preacher*, October 10, 2010. Luther Seminary. [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=783](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=783).