

## **Sermon October 12, 2025**

### **Who is/was Jesus? -strips of paper**

#### **Luke 17:11-19**

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

### **Building Hope**

The story of our faith, from Genesis to today, centers on God's promises to the people of God. God's people would have a land of their own, a place to call home. A heavenly homeland. In ancient days, God brought them through the wilderness. They carried the precious commandments given, etched in stone... they were given strength by the promises. In their Promised Land, Solomon built a beautiful temple that held so many treasures... including the beloved Ark that protected the Commandments as the people carefully carried them through the wilderness. It was in the Temple that people believed that they were literally stood in the presence of God.

The people lived in the land. They built houses, planted gardens, had families and passed down the stories of God's creative goodness. But eventually they lost sight of the promises. They forgot to be grateful to the one that brought

them from slavery to freedom. They forgot that all that they had and all that they had become were gifts given to them by God... gifts they could lose if the people strayed too far.

Prophets warned them to change their ways, but no one listened, and finally, the worst fears were realized. The Babylonian army marched through their towns and villages... the Babylonian army marched into Jerusalem and tore their beloved Temple down. The Ark and the Commandments were ground to dust. The streets flowed with the blood of political and religious leaders, as well as anyone who got in their way. Those leaders who were not slaughtered were captured and taken into captivity, leaving the people without a leader... without hope.

And they lived in Exile for 60 years. Generations were born there and never touched the shore of the Promised Land. Not only had they lost their beloved land... they thought God had abandoned them forever.

As the grief weighed them down, a letter from the prophet Jeremiah arrives for the exiles. After years of warning the people of impending doom, the prophet must have been tempted to say, "I told you so," but he didn't. Instead, he offers guidance and a glimmer of hope:

Listen to God, he says, build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Get married and have families... and help your children to establish their own families. Multiply in number; do not decrease. Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Make yourselves at home, God tells them. Do not spend your time grieving and mourning for a past that is long gone, but look at the ways you can rebuild your future. Here, even in the worst of times, you can find hope

During times of tragedy and fear, God can seem very far away. Sometimes it may feel like we haven't made any progress at all, as we look at the devastation in places like Gaza and Israel. And when we look at the divisions

that threatened to tear our own country apart. The difficult times in our lives are a time when many lose faith. Yet, it is exactly in times like these when we need a glimpse of God's Grace.

God comes to us... God comes to us when we need God's presence most. Even in the midst of the most difficult times, we realize that we are never alone.

- ∞ We are not alone during times of war or brutal violence
- ∞ We are not alone as we pick up the pieces after a devastating storm
- ∞ We are not alone in the aftermath of a terrifying diagnosis
- ∞ We are not alone when friends turn away from us
- ∞ We are not alone when our leaders make decisions that affect our jobs and our pocketbooks
- ∞ We are not alone when we sit by the hospital bed or stand by the gravestone

We are not alone. We are never alone.

Jeremiah reminds the people to be grateful for God's presence in their lives, no matter how much their lives have changed for the worse, just as the healed man turned to Jesus in gratitude.

"Get up," Jesus tells the healed man, "your faith made you well."

As the other 9 others resumed their old lives, no longer outcasts... the tenth person decides to take a leap of faith and follow Jesus.

We are called to get up... to have faith. And when we do, God offers us hope and we are made well.

A few verses after today's reading, Jeremiah writes to the people that God's promises will be fulfilled. It will take a few generations, but the time of exile will end. But God's promises never end.

*For surely I know the plans I have for you, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.*

We don't know when the plans will be fulfilled... we don't know what they are. But we know the plans involve each of us... as individuals and as a community. God has a plan for each of us. A plan that will lift us up... a plan that will give us a future of hope. And every time we look upon the empty cross, we know how tremendous God's plans can be

And so, my friends, we hope in God's good future, even when we stand in the shadow of the cross. We trust that we are not alone as we wait. Today God reminds us that God is with us... and will act for us... even when we lose hope. God is at work even in the most difficult of situations and experiences.

God worked in and through the oppression of Egypt and set the people free

God worked through the shock of exile in Babylon and offered hope

God worked, hidden, in the suffering of the cross and brought us the promise of new life

And God is already working right here, right now!

If God could work in all these places of sorrow, then God's people can be at home anywhere. God, in Christ, made this place God's home. And God's home is a place filled with blessings. We are a blessing for those with whom we live and make our home. God has a plan for us and we are already a part of the fulfillment.

Jesus wants us to follow him. Amen