

## Trinity 14

*Were there not ten cleansed? But were are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?*

Many people consider themselves to be religious and godly because of the way that they feel toward God.

They go up into the mountains to enjoy their beauty and serenity and say to themselves, "God is wonderful."

They go to the doctor worried that they might have cancer and find out they don't and say, "Thank God for that!"

They worry about some financial need and pray to God about it and when it is met they say to themselves, "God must be listening."

Nobody could find fault with these words and feelings, but you also have to recognize that none of these responses goes beyond what they nine lepers did who did not return to Jesus to glorify God.

Don't assume that these nine were cold and heartless people who are criticized because they had no thankful feelings for their miraculous healing.

In fact, the Gospel gives you no clue about their feelings.

What it does do, however, is comment on their actions.

I, myself, don't doubt that all ten had thankful feelings.

But only one returned to Jesus. And that made all the difference.

Perhaps this emphasis on actions strikes a wrong chord.

After all, we are saved by faith, not works, aren't we?

Yes, we are. But do not mistake faith for feelings.

Do not assume that faith toward God is the same thing as good feelings about Him.

I would judge that the vast, vast majority of the people in this world have good feelings toward God, but still remain among the damned.

Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and even foxhole atheists...even most people in this town and in this country who consider themselves Christian.

But loving the supreme being in the universe is not what saves you.

Rather, it is the physical coming before the man, Jesus, which saves you.

All ten were saved from their leprosy. This much is true.

But only one was saved eternally. Jesus told him, "*Your faith has saved you.*"

How did his faith save him? It impelled him to fall at Jesus' feet!

And there, Jesus gave him forgiveness, life and salvation.

Salvation is a gift. It is given, not earned.

But it is only given through the flesh and blood of the man, Jesus.

For the God whom all the world seeks after...

The God who created all the world...

"Came down from heaven." He does not wish to be sought there.

But He "was incarnate of the Virgin, Mary and was made man."

God lives and breathes. He walks and talks.

The creator became a creature. He took on flesh and blood.

He became, as it were, a leper to cure leprosy.

He became a sinner to take away your sins.

He suffered death to give you life.

And all of this He did in the flesh.

Apart from the flesh He could do none of it.

And so, not only then, but still today, the flesh and blood of Jesus is our only hope.

But just as in Jesus' day, so also in ours, most of what passes for spirituality completely bypasses the flesh and blood of the Man, Jesus Christ.

God is spoken of in generic terms apart from Christ.

Or else, Jesus is spoken of as some disembodied spirit.

In either case, the piety and faith of the Samaritan is lost.

For instead of kneeling at the flesh and blood of Jesus, they are content only to thank God in heaven above.

In so doing, they miss the gift of forgiveness, life and salvation which Jesus gives out in His body and blood.

This is the place of the Third Commandment in the Christian life.

*"Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy."*

*"Do not forsake the gathering of ourselves together..."* (Hebrews 10:25)

What's the point of gathering together for worship? That's the place where Jesus promises to be! "*Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I...*"

That's why: "We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word. But hold it sacred and gladly hear it and learn it."

To "hold preaching sacred" means to believe...

...To believe that there, in that place, is Jesus.

...To believe that hearing a sermon falling at Jesus' feet.

...To believe that coming to the *Divine Service* is returning to give thanks.

This gives glory to God. For this man is God.

When I believe that, nothing is going to keep me from that place.

Because I know that my life and health and all that I have come from this man.

Therefore, I can be sure that He will also give me forgiveness, life and salvation.

In fact, this is the reason Jesus bids us to pray, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*"

Not so that we might talk Him into giving us what He would not otherwise...

For, "God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving."

God gives healing of leprosy to all ten--even to all evil people.

But we pray for healing in order that "God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving."

We pray so that God would lead us to return to the feet of Jesus and so receive even more than our daily bread--even more than we had originally asked.

When you are worried about your health or your finances or your family, by all means pray for these morsels of daily bread.

And when you, then, mark and receive God's manifold blessings, let your thanksgiving drive you to the flesh and blood of Jesus.

For here, you receive not just daily bread but the Bread of Life Himself.

Just as the leper first received healing from his fleshly leprosy, but then, upon returning to Christ, also received cleansing from his sin as well.

So today as you approach this altar, remember that you are here receiving the very flesh of Christ who became a leper to heal you of your leprosy and who now brings health, soundness and thankfulness to all your flesh.

Then "*Go your way, your faith has saved you.*" AMEN.