



McCabe United Methodist Church

November 25, 2018

“Grow and Go ”

Luke 17:11-18

Pastor Mark Ehrmantraut

Good Morning, Church!

On this Thanksgiving weekend I'm thankful for the chance to worship together today. I'm thankful that we're gathered in the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit is alive and stirring right here among us this morning.

A few weeks ago, Pastor Jenny offered the invitation, “Friends, come as you are.” and she hinted at “but don't expect to stay as you are.”

Last week, we wrestled with the idea of coming as we are and seeking Jesus. Seeking to leave different than when we came in.

This morning let's begin to wrestle with what happens next - the invitation - come as we are to seek Jesus. So, we can grow. So, we can go and make a difference in the world.

Let's pray:

“Holy and Mighty God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations on each of our hearts be acceptable in your sight. You are our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.”

Beth Moore writes that she was seeking to serve. She was growing in faith. She was feeling almost compelled to go and serve like Jesus. She ended up in a unique situation.

Moore was on a trip overseas. She came to a place where people were set apart. They had leprosy or related conditions. Moore wrote that she so badly wanted to minister with the people, but she couldn't. She begged herself to go in, but she just couldn't do it.

She was too afraid she would get overpowered by the nauseating smells and the intense suffering associated with the disease. She was too afraid she'd get violently sick. Instead of being a healing presence she was afraid she would hinder the mission.

These skin conditions – like leprosy, if left unchecked - can leave a person suffering and feeling less than whole.

So, I'd like to invite you into this morning's scripture. It's in the Gospel of Luke 17:11-17.

¹¹ As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria. ¹² As he entered a village there, ten men with leprosy stood at a distance, ¹³ crying out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

Jesus was traveling through the countryside and up ahead was a village. But outside the village there was a group of guys. They want Jesus' attention. But even as he got closer they were keeping their distance. Jesus heard what they were saying. They were begging and pleading. "Jesus, have mercy on us! Jesus, have mercy on us!"

Luke doesn't record a lot about the interaction, but these guys were hurting. They were seeking healing and restoration. They knew that in Jesus there was hope.

¹⁴ (Jesus) looked at them and said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy.

The men made a request and Jesus gave a directive. The men begged for mercy and Jesus ordered them to get moving.

Come as you are but don't expect to stay as you are. Come as you are, then go in the name of Jesus. Go and be healed. Go and bring hope and healing to the world.

Jesus said to go, go to the priests and tell your story. These guys had a story to tell, didn't they?

If you were an Israelite, if you had a rash or a skin disease, you went to the priest. The priest looked at you and the priest decided if you were contagious or not. If you were deemed contagious, you were kicked outside of the community until you got better. If you got better. And this made sense, didn't it?

First, we know this isn't necessarily the case but the thinking at the time was that if you were suffering you were being punished for something you'd done wrong.

Second, from a community health perspective if you had a contagious disease they wanted you out of town. You were banished or quarantined. They wanted to prevent an epidemic.

But it was harsh, and it could tear you apart – banished – isolated - separated from your family and your friends and your house and your job and your worship. A wall was erected between you and the community you loved.

But this condition was frightening – contagious - and left unchecked. The bacteria ate at a person's flesh and nerve damage took place. Self-injury happened because when the pain stopped numbness took over. You might not even realize you were harming yourself.

And our Scripture says, "¹⁴ (Jesus) looked at (the men with leprosy) and said, 'Go show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy."

These men cried out to Jesus and before they were even fully healed Jesus told them to get going. Even before they were healed Jesus sent them on their way.

Friends, in life we can't always wait. We can't always wait for things to be perfect or exactly how we want them. Often, we're sent. We must go in faith to tell the stories of Jesus. Sometimes we must go whether we're ready or not.

We come as we are - seeking Jesus - and Jesus sends us. We might be growing as we go. Looking for hope and healing.

Think about the Old Testament in the Bible for a moment. In the Old Testament time after time the people went looking for hope and healing in places other than the Lord their God and it typically didn't go so well.

We just came through "Thanksgiving shopping" and Black Friday sales. It's Cyber Monday tomorrow. Even today we can get pulled into seeking healing and wholeness in places and things other than Jesus. Then we look at the Gospels and Jesus saying, "Return to me."

I don't know about you but in the middle of everything I can get desensitized. I can lose my sense of awe at just how miraculous the work of Jesus is.

Come as we are so we can grow and be different than when we came. Come as we are so we can begin to heal. So, we can go tell people about the difference Jesus makes in our lives.

Back to our Scripture. The men are walking along - going to the priests. ¹⁵ One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, "Praise God!" ¹⁶ He fell to the ground at Jesus' feet, thanking him for what he had done. This man was a Samaritan.

This man came back praising God. There was nothing about this guy that should have made him the hero here. He was a foreigner. But he came, seeking Jesus. He came wanting to leave different than when he came. But the thing that really made him different in Jesus' eyes was the thanksgiving. He paused, and he gave thanks for what Jesus had done for him.

¹⁷ Jesus asked, "Didn't I heal ten men? Where are the other nine?" ¹⁸ Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?"

We're reminded that God doesn't want to be taken for granted. Jesus gets blunt. Let's see, I just healed ten of you. Where are your buddies? Only one out of ten say thank you?

¹⁹ And Jesus said to the man, "Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you." Go with gratitude. Go with faith and let healing begin to happen.

Friends, it's Thanksgiving weekend. We come as we are. Jesus receives us as we are, not to stay as we are, but to grow so WE can go into the world bringing hope and healing. Going into the world to make a difference.

Jesus said, "Didn't I just heal ten men? Where are the other nine?"

Friends, what if that question is put to us? What about our hearts? Do we have thankful hearts? And, if we say yes does our thankfulness lead to meaningful action?

Meaningful action - Some of you know I don't really believe in the excuses like I'm used up or I'm not useful or I'm too old or I've already done that - or you fill in the blank. I'm a firm believer that as long we're drawing breath on this earth God has a purpose for us. It might be teaching - it might be praying - it might be giving or building or writing or visiting or serving. Again, you fill in the blank for how God is nudging you.

How is God's Holy Spirit urging you forward? How is God's Holy Spirit tugging at you to take the next step in faith?

We don't have to be perfect before we go. In fact, as United Methodists we believe we are moving on to perfection. We haven't yet reached perfection, but we are continually invited to seek and to grow. We're directed to go - telling the stories of Jesus - making a difference with our words and our actions.

Next week we start Advent. We'll intentionally begin wrestling with preparing our hearts and our minds for the miracle of Christmas. But before we head full steam towards Christmas let's pause and be thankful.

Let's be thankful that there is nothing that can scar you or me so badly that we are unlovable to Jesus. Let's be thankful that there is no sin that so great that we have revolted Jesus by our stench. Let's be thankful for God's generosity in our lives. Let's be thankful for God's life-saving work through Jesus Christ.

As we prepare for Holy Communion this morning the invitation is wide open.

Let's be thankful,
Let's come as we are,
Let's seek Jesus,
Let's grow so we can go - so we can go a little different than when we first came in this morning.

"Friends, with Thanksgiving, let's pause and let's prepare to come to the table to break bread together, to drink from the cup together, to praise God together and to fall on our knees calling out like the 10 lepers, 'O Lord, have mercy on me.'"