

Be the Samaritan Leper
Preacher: Rev. Lauren Lorincz
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“Be the Samaritan Leper!” Pilgrim Church UCC, October 9, 2016, Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Luke 17:11-19)

Do we need to complicate this story?

-That's what we learn to do in Seminary, complicate the text! Historical context and knowing what type of literature this is within the Bible is vital! But maybe we don't need to worry so much about that here.

-Maybe instead we find our place in this story. You just saw the cast of characters:

-Jesus, 9 lepers, 1 Samaritan leper, Priests

-More often than not we may be the 9 lepers who have something amazing happen, and completely forget to thank God!

-These folks aren't bad, they're probably just so happy to be healed that they can't wait to get to the Temple, be examined by the priests, and then be restored to their community!

-But what would it be like to connect to the 10th leper, the Samaritan leper?

-A compassionate act changed his life and restored him, so he goes to thank the one responsible

-The Samaritan remains an outsider. He's still not “in”, but Jesus sees him as a beloved child of God.

Stories of Restoration

-Think of all the stories you hear about people thanking those who saved their life.

-Those stories get me every time and maybe get some of you every time too: bone marrow donors who meet the people whose life they saved, organ donors meeting the person who now has their loved one's heart, firefighters who meet the child saved from the flames, WWII veterans reunited with Holocaust survivors they may have liberated from concentration camps.

-Restoration is possible!

-Restoration can mean to return something that was stolen or taken—and in Luke's Gospel Jesus is restoring dignity and self-worth to the lepers. It had been taken by their disease and by the way society reacted to someone with that disease.

-Think of how society has treated and sometimes still treats people who have AIDS. There was a time when people thought you could get AIDS through touch. Weren't those suffering treated like lepers?

-Restoration doesn't mean there was never any suffering. Doesn't make the journey disappear (good and bad.) But we may have these moments where we see the power of compassion.

Be the Samaritan Leper!

-It's important to thank the people in our lives who provide compassion, who may even help restore us to God, to our neighbors, and to our best selves.

-Gratitude is one of the most powerful spiritual practices anyone can have--gratitude journals are a thing because writing down what we are thankful for helps reframe and reshape how we live.

-And even if we selfishly think what's in it for me there are benefits to practicing gratitude.

-People who regularly practice gratitude—who take time to notice and reflect upon what they are thankful for—have more positive emotions, tend to feel more alive, sleep better, express more compassion and kindness to others, and even have stronger immune systems.

-Gratitude makes us healthy on so many levels.

-We are not just Sunday morning Christians so this week think of one person in your life who's helped you out, been there for you, shown compassion, provided some healing and tell them! Express your gratitude.

-You don't have to fall down and worship them like the Samaritan Leper did with Jesus.

-Write them a note, give them a call, give them a hug, or have a conversation in person. Practice gratitude with just one person this week and see how you feel!

-We can all be the Samaritan Leper and turn around to say thank you. Thank you. Amen.