

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2022

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

**32<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME**

**GATHERING**

**PRELUDE**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth;  
sing your praise to the glory of God's name.  
**All: Great and awesome are the works of God.**  
One: Gather to remember all that God has revealed.  
Come to discover what God is doing among us.  
**All: The promises of God are trustworthy and true.**  
One: Let us sing for joy to God who protects us!  
**All: Let us come before God with thanksgiving.**

**\*OPENING HYMN** "Now Thank We All Our God" GtG 643

- 1. Now thank we all our God  
with heart and hands and voices,  
who wondrous things hath done,  
in whom this world rejoices;  
who, from our mothers' arms,  
hath blessed us on our way  
with countless gifts of love,  
and still is ours today.**
- 2. O may this bounteous God  
through all our life be near us,  
with ever joyful hearts  
and blessed peace to cheer us;  
and keep us in God's grace,  
and guide us when perplexed,  
and free us from all ills  
in this world and the next.**

*(continued...)*

3. **All praise and thanks to God,  
who reigns in highest heaven,  
to Father and to Son  
and Spirit now be given:  
the one eternal God,  
whom heaven and earth adore,  
the God who was, and is,  
and shall be evermore.**

*(Public Domain)*

### **UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**Hear our prayer, O Lord. Your blessings are all around us. We live in the presence of your mercy day by day. But we overlook your work and take for granted the things we receive from your hand. Forgive us, O Lord. Remind us that all things good come from you. Remind us of our dependence upon you. And teach us to be grateful, in every word we speak and everything we do. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.**

### **SILENT CONFESSION**

#### **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

- One:            Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth. Remember the resurrection of Jesus and accept the opportunity to be raised to new life in Christ.
- All:             **We are healed and forgiven by a trustworthy God whose righteousness endures forever and whose grace and love extend beyond the heavens and into the very depths of our hearts.**
- One:            Hear the good news:
- All:             **In Christ we are forgiven and set free  
to live in praise and thanksgiving!  
Thanks be to God!**

### **THE PEACE**

- One:            The peace of Christ be with you.
- All:             **And also with you.**

*(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)*

### **THE WORD**

**SCRIPTURE READING** Luke 17:11-19

LUKE 17:11-19 (New Revised Standard Version)

<sup>11</sup> On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup> As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, <sup>13</sup> they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" <sup>14</sup> When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. <sup>15</sup> Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. <sup>16</sup> He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup> Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?" <sup>18</sup> Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" <sup>19</sup> Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

## PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON "The Nine Who Got Away; The One Who Didn't" by Pastor Bill Vincent

If these lepers are any indication, the situation is pretty sad.

Ten men – covered with a terrible skin disease that destines them to isolation and ostracism from other people, except those who suffer the same terrible skin disease – ten men cry out to Jesus,

*Master, have mercy on us.*

And Jesus prescribes the normal procedure for someone who has been cleansed from leprosy: to present themselves to the priest for confirmation of the cleansing. And on their way to the priest, they are indeed healed of their disease. But, so the story goes, only one notices and returns to Jesus to say thank you.

Ten lepers were healed. Only one returned to say thank you. One out of every ten is a poor percentage.

But, sadly enough, it may be a very typical percentage. As one person once noted,

**A cat can be trusted to purr when she is pleased, which is more than can be said about human beings.** (William Ralph Inge)

I would dare to say that not one of us gives thanks as often as is called for with the many ways we have been blessed, whether due to our oversight or taking things for granted, or we don't feel like we have the time and so we're silent and keep it to ourselves.

And we fail to give thanks for the blessings of God: for healing from illness, though maybe not leprosy, but healing from Covid, surgery, mental illness. We fail to give thanks for the gifts of family and friends; for love given and compliments received; for the beauty of the earth and life-sustaining food, clothing, and shelter; for the wonder of the human mind and the kindness of someone's heart; for living in a land where we can gather at will and worship as we so choose, and where we can vote and be a part of the political process of our country. We fail to give thanks for opportunities to grow and learn; for the warmth of the sun and the coolness of the wind; for the bright colors and marvels of creation.

All too often we do not give thanks as often as is called for with the many ways we have been blessed.

And so we are among the nine who got away without saying thank you.

But then there is the one who did return to give thanks.

And do you know who that was?

The 'goody two shoes' of the group? No. The outstanding citizen among them? No. The good Jew and religious leader? No.

Who was it? A Samaritan – an outcast. The foreigner. One who stood – or was shoved – outside the 'accepted religious community'. The one least expected to give thanks.

Maybe this tells us something about our gratitude and thanksgiving...or lack thereof.

Could it be that it is sometimes those people who stand *outside* the accepted religious community who are *most aware* when they are recipients of God's grace and mercy?

Could it be that it is those people who stand *outside* the accepted religious community who *best understand* that God's grace and mercy are undeserved and unwarranted, and hence the occasion for great rejoicing?

Could it be that it is those people who stand *outside* the accepted religious community who express the *greater appreciation* for God's grace and mercy precisely because for them it is so unexpected?

Could it be that it is those of us who stand within the accepted religious community who tend to take God's mercy and grace for granted, who expect it – or maybe even believe it is our due – and hence we have lost our capacity to be "surprised by joy" as C.S. Lewis describes it; we have lost our capacity to be truly grateful?

When we take for granted God's grace and mercy, when we expect it as our due, then our "leprosy" may indeed be cleansed, but there is no gratitude, there is no joy.

If we take for granted that we will be cleansed, then the good news is no longer good. In fact, it is hardly even news but more like a footnote to our lives. When instead it should be front page headlines: "God forgives guilty people!" "God cleanses unworthy people!" "God loves undeserving people!" – you and me.

Now let me be clear: the point is not the need of the giver to receive thanks. All ten lepers asked for mercy and all ten received it, but only one gave thanks. Jesus's showing of mercy was not dependent upon a reciprocal giving of thanks. He did not heal the lepers on condition that they thank him. That is of the nature of grace: it is not only undeserved; it is also unconditional, with no strings attached.

No, God does not need our thanks.

But we need to give thanks.

We need to give thanks to *remind* ourselves of our dependence upon God and to strengthen our trust in our heavenly provider.

We need to give thanks to *open our eyes* to still further evidence of God's grace. It is of the nature of gratitude: a kind of snowball effect, where the naming of certain blessings reminds us of more and more and more.

But we also need to give thanks because it is *of the essence of our faith*.

As Luke tells the story, the disciples had very recently asked Jesus to increase their faith. So that as Luke juxtaposes that question of the disciples with this story of the ten lepers, we see something of his understanding of faith. And gratitude is crucial to it.

Ten lepers cry for mercy. Ten lepers are healed. But only one returns to give glory to God, to give thanks to Jesus. And that one – an outsider, a Samaritan – that one, *and that one only*, is said to have faith.

*Your faith has made you well,*

Jesus said.

Could it be that faith does not exist without thanksgiving and giving glory to God? Could it be that the posture that takes God's grace and mercy for granted is incapable of faith? Or that true faith elicits thanksgiving?

I honestly don't know the full answers to these questions. But I do suspect some truths to be had from our examination of the passage and its questions.

One: that faith and thanksgiving are intimately connected. I don't know if one gives birth to the other, but I do believe that you can't have one without the other. So that if faith is claimed and thanksgiving is not evident, then that faith comes into question. And maybe too, even if faith is not claimed but thanksgiving is present, then that is its own evidence of faith.

Two: that thanksgiving is vital to our lives. That one out of ten may be the actual percentage, but that is no excuse. For there is much for us to be thankful for. And it is part and parcel of our relationship to God to give thanks. As the Medieval German mystic, Meister Eckhart, once said,

**If the only prayer you say in your whole life is "thank you" that would suffice.** (found in 1987-88 Presbyterian Planning Calendar)

Gratitude is essential to our life of faith.

Three: And we who stand within the 'accepted religious community' need to beware of the trap of familiarity, which as we all know, breeds contempt...or maybe simply boredom. We hear – indeed, we proclaim – the good news of what God has done for us: of God's forgiveness and grace, provision and presence. We hear it all the time. And that hearing it all the time can diminish some of the newness, the excitement, the wonder of it all. And grace can seem blasé, mercy can seem commonplace, and God can appear to be at our beck and call. When that is not the case at all.

Familiarity can breed a lack of appreciation for exactly how wonderful and miraculous the good news is.

So, how will we respond to the mercies of God all around us?

*"Master, have mercy on us,"* the lepers cried to Jesus. How many times have we ourselves called out to our Lord for help? How many times have we been aware of God's blessings but remained silent? How many times have we overlooked God's gifts? How many times have we taken them for granted?

One out of ten is not a very good percentage. But I believe we can strive to 'up' the percentage.

## A SHARING

### CELEBRATING THE SAINTS “For All the Saints” StF 2283

1. **For all the saints who’ve shown your love  
in how they live and where they move,  
for mindful wo - men, caring men,  
accept our gra - titude again.**

Lighting a Candle for Family

2. **For all the saints who loved your name,  
whose faith increased the Savior’s fame,  
who sang your songs and shared your word,  
accept our gra - titude, good Lord.**

Lighting a Candle for Friends

3. **For all the saints who named your will,  
and showed the king - dom coming still  
through selfless pro - test, prayer, and praise,  
accept the gra - titude we raise.**

Lighting a Candle for Others

4. **Bless all whose will or name or love  
reflects the grace of heaven above.  
Though unacclaimed by earthly powers,  
your life through theirs has hallowed ours.**

*Words used by permission through CCLI License #11178434 / #2457662.  
Music: Public Domain*

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: Lord, in your mercy...  
All: ...hear our prayer.

## THE EUCHARIST

### OFFERING

*Invitation*

*Reflection*

*\*Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**We praise and glorify your name, O God.  
You have given us more than we could have imagined!  
For the good news of your grace,  
for wholeness received,  
for the gift of belonging,  
for the blessing of those who are vessels of your love,  
we thank you.  
Make of us, and our gifts,  
offerings of good news to the poor,  
hope to the hopeless,  
and signs of your power to reconcile and redeem.  
We ask all things in the name of Christ. Amen.**

**SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

*Invitation to the Lord's Table*

*Prayer of Thanksgiving*

Leader: The Lord be with you.  
**People: And also with you.**  
Leader: Lift up your hearts.  
**People: We lift them to the Lord.**  
Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

*(The prayer continues...)*

*The Lord's Prayer* (Traditional)

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever. Amen.**

*Breaking of the Bread*

*Communion of the People*

(Please hold the bread so that we might partake of it together, to remind us of our participation in this sacrament as a community. Please drink the cup as you are served, reminding us of our individual participation in this sacrament and our personal commitment to our Lord.)

*Prayer*

**SENDING**

**\*CLOSING HYMN** “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God” GtG 730

1. **I sing a song of the saints of God,  
patient and brave and true,  
who toiled and fought and lived and died  
for the Lord they loved and knew.  
And one was a doctor, and one was a queen,  
and one was a shepherdess on the green:  
they were all of them saints of God, and I mean,  
God helping, to be one too.**
2. **They loved their Lord so dear, so dear,  
and God's love made them strong;  
and they followed the right, for Jesus' sake,  
the whole of their good lives long.  
And one was a soldier, and one was a priest,  
and one was slain by a fierce wild beast:  
and there's not any reason, no, not the least,  
why I shouldn't be one too.**
3. **They lived not only in ages past;  
there are hundreds of thousands still;  
the world is bright with the joyous saints  
who love to do Jesus' will.  
You can meet them in school, or in lanes, or at sea,  
in church, or in trains, or in shops, or at tea;  
for the saints of God are just folk like me,  
and I mean to be one too.**

*Words: I Sing a Song of the Saints of God, Text by Lesbia Scott.  
Copyright 1929, Morehouse Publishing/Church Publishing, All rights reserved.  
Reprinted / Podcast / Streamed with permission under ONE LICENSE #A-  
739819/#A-739796. All rights reserved.  
Music: Public Domain.*



## **\*CHARGE AND BLESSING**

One:           ...And let the gathered people of God say...  
All:            ...**Amen.**

## **POSTLUDE**

The Call to Worship and Assurance of Pardon are reprinted by permission of United Church Press from *Gathered by Love* by Lavon Bayler. Copyright 1994 by United Church Press.

The Call to Worship is from *Lectionary Worship Aids, Series VI, Cycle C* by H. Burnham Kirkland. Used by permission, CSS Publishing Company, Inc., copyright 2003.

The Assurance of Pardon, Prayers of the People (adapted), and Prayer of Dedication are used by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from *Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion*. Copyright 2013.

The Prayers of the People (adapted) and Prayer of Thanksgiving are used by permission from *Book of Common Worship*, © 1993 Westminster/John Knox Press.