

**Christianity in a New Age**  
**Series 5: The Journey to Jerusalem** (Affirmation 4)  
**Part 5: Jesus's Healings (Healing Ten Lepers)**  
**Rev. Dr. Chris Alexander**  
**March 18, 2018**

### **I. Gratitude**

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

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

#### **Reflection:**

Jesus could have cleansed these people right there on the spot, and could have received their thanks immediately, but he didn't. Instead Jesus sent them back to their communities to reenter the lives from which they had come. Reenter the lives for which they had been created.

So why did Jesus ask the Samaritan where the other nine were who were healed? Doesn't it sound to you as if Jesus is a bit angry here? "*Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?*" But what if we change the tone a bit on this question? What if we treat it as more a "wondering" of Jesus rather than a demanding questioning? "*Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, I wonder what they are doing now?*" In this sense, **gratitude and praise to God would have been expressed in a well-lived life: returning to the community and living, being what they had been created for.**

One of the other nine might have gone back to their home and resumed their role as a parent to their children, teaching them from their own experience what it was like to live on the fringes of society and what it felt like to have someone grant them mercy and wholeness in the face of loneliness and loss. Their children would know then how to show mercy to others who feel deserted and alone.

Another of the nine might have returned to their home and livelihood, perhaps, carpentry. With their restored life, perhaps they would use their gifts to build houses for those who have no place to live or no way to provide shelter for their families.

Another might have gone straight to the synagogue to study and pray and tell people of the mercy God had shown them in order that others may believe and be freed from their own struggles with fear and resentment.

We too can be found among those Jesus restores through God's mercy. And Jesus is asking each of us what we will do with the lives that we have been given to live? Will we be messengers of faith,

telling our stories to all who would have ears to hear? Will we be parents who raise their children to care for others and for their world? Will we be people who use the gifts God has given us to feed and shelter those who need our mercy? Will we be able to trust in God's mercy enough to let go of the fear and resentment that blocks us from fully living?

If living into the abundant life God has given to us is the deepest form of gratitude, how will we live that out? How will we say *thank you* to God for all that we have been given? As individuals? As a community of faith? Where will Jesus find us now that we too are freed from all those things that push us to be outcasts from the community God has given us?

The hymn "Now thank we all our God" (#715) reminds us of this gratitude. In verse one we thank God through our hearts and hands and voices. We use the gifts God has given us to create lives that show mercy to others while singing of God's mercy toward us. The second verse assures that God will be with us throughout our lives keeping us in a life of grace, guiding us when perplexed, and freeing us from harm. God frees us from worry so we may be voices of hope and mercy in the world. And in verse three we claim our part of this promise of God made through Jesus and continues in the Spirit, "for thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore."

We thank our God by *living in God*, the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sustainer of all life.

We will take the next few minutes to consider 13 pieces of art and a few quotes inspired by gratitude. As you watch and listen, let your mind wonder, "*How do you live your life in thanks to God?*"

### **Thoughts on Gratitude** – 13 pieces of art with 12 quotes on Gratitude

1. "At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us." — Albert Schweitzer
2. "Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom." — Marcel Proust
3. "We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures." — Thornton Wilder
4. "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle." — Albert Einstein
5. "Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings." — William Arthur Ward
6. "Take full account of the excellencies which you possess, and in gratitude remember how you would hanker after them, if you had them not." — Marcus Aurelius
7. "We often take for granted the very things that most deserve our gratitude." — Cynthia Ozick
8. "Can you see the holiness in those things you take for granted—a paved road or a washing machine? If you concentrate on finding what is good in every situation, you will discover that your life will suddenly be filled with gratitude, a feeling that nurtures the soul." — Rabbi Harold Kushner

9. "When we become more fully aware that our success is due in large measure to the loyalty, helpfulness, and encouragement we have received from others, our desire grows to pass on similar gifts. Gratitude spurs us on to prove ourselves worthy of what others have done for us. The spirit of gratitude is a powerful energizer." — Wilferd A. Peterson

10. "Thou that has given so much to me, Give one thing more—a grateful heart; Not thankful when it pleaseth me, As if thy blessings had spare days; But such a heart, whose pulse may be Thy praise."

— George Herbert

11. "If the only prayer you say in your life is thank you, that would suffice." — Meister Eckhart

12. "Find the good and praise it." — Alex Haley

## **Musical Offering**

### **II. Healing as Wholeness**

**Reflection:** Will Howell has a Conversation with Larry Wiess on healing through Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Gratitude

**9:00 – Intercessory Prayer and Candle Ritual/Communion/Pray-ers** (Jerry Brown, Jan Brown)

**11:00 – Intercessory Prayer and Communion/Pray-ers** (Jerry Brown and Margie Bolte)

### **Intercessory Prayer**

#### **Intercessory Prayer: Praying for One Another**

Let us gather in groups of 2-3 at your seats. Please identify for one another something that is of concern for you, or something that seems to be blocking you from being open to receiving love. This person will be praying for you through what we call intercessory prayer. This type of prayer understands that God's love for us allows us to reach out in love to another, on their behalf. I'll give you a couple of minutes to identify that one thing for which you would like prayer, and then we will come back together and do some guided intercessory prayer.

Now let us take a deep breath in, and let it out slowly. Take another breath in... and let it out. Now center yourself in quietness - continuing to breathe - and seeking that place inside of you where you have experienced what it means to be loved. Find that place where you feel calm, safe, and loved. In this space, picture the person who has asked for your prayer. Surround this image with the love that you feel in this safe and calm place. Consider this person's request for prayer. Is it a prayer for their health? Then find that part for which they would like prayer in your own body, and call forth its strength. If it is a request to ease anxiety about a job, finances, or concern for a loved one, then find that place in you where your own calm is the strongest and draw from its strength. Once you have built up the strength in the areas needed, send that strength and that energy over to the person you are praying for. Whatever that person's request, find that part inside of you and build the energy of your prayer, drawing from your own strength in this area.

If this is a prayer for health, remember that this is lending your strength to the other for healing... this is not a prayer for so called "curing, but wholeness and strength in who they are altogether. If it is a prayer addressing an anxiety, remember we are not praying that this person will find a job or will come into a windfall of money somehow, but rather that their anxiety about their job status or their financial status ceases to cause them undue anxiety. Pray that they are able to draw from their own

sense of calm no matter what their situation may be. Continue to hold this person and their request in your prayers throughout the week, continuing to draw on your own strength in this area, sending it to them.