

The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 23)
 Year of the Lord 2019
 Luke 17

**“Holy Spirit, Light Divine, shine upon this heart of mine;
 Chase the shades of night away; turn the darkness into day!”
 “Let me see my Savior’s face; let me all HIS beauties trace!
 Show those glorious truths to me which are only known to
 Thee!”**

Luke 17:11–19 On the way to Jerusalem [Jesus] was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed. *Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”*

In the Name of Jesus:

Ten received THEIR hearts’ desire; one received that, and more: Jesus’ heart’s desire—to give more; to BE more! We may wonder with adoration and joy how this new disciple of Jesus received His Body and His Blood when that day came! That one was in need of more than his heart could desire.

Oh! Dear ones! We’re safe and secure with our God, our Jesus—MORE than WE could ever think, ask, pray, desire! We have That ‘MORE’ living in and around us: The Pledge of the Father; the Spirit Who creates us anew so we can’t be snuffed out! “My Father PROMISED Him for Me, for y’all! And My Father does NOT go back on His Word!”

And yet—this must, in some way, have cast a shadow on the one man’s thanksgiving—Jesus wonders, ALOUD!, ‘Where are the other nine?!’ Oh! But even THERE, the one of ten heard the

deepest yearning of the Man headed resolutely to Jerusalem. He would be MORE for the one, the nine, the ten together, and the world!

Why did Jesus send the ten to show themselves to the priests? That's what MOSES would do! Read Moses' Book of Leviticus, chapter 13; then spilling over to chapter 14! Leprosy—trouble with our largest organ, our skin!—was a sign that you were somehow 'out' with God; at least God's people. The way back in was through the priests who sacrificed at the temple. As they would inspect the animals fit for God's temple, so they kept a keen eye on the approach of the animal called Man.

Dear ones: your poor pastor is going to break off here, break out of 'Bible-study' mode I fear I'm falling into. If you desire the back and forth discussion about this type of thing, I am at your service. We are here—the Spirit has called us here, our FAITH!—to thank and praise the God called Jesus, son of Mary: for being MORE than any man desires! MORE than WE desire!

Friends: the LAW is impressive; the GOSPEL leaves men flat.

The LAW...WORKS! It is 'SURE-FIRE!' The Gospel is as far from working, from works, from putting ANYTHING in OUR hands, hearts, desires—farther than WE can cajigger! Men will even turn the 'FAITH' that made the one well into something now residing in that man, rather than the GIVING of Jesus Himself!

My sons showed me a comic who stated, 'I have to admit that I'm pretty old-fashioned. That's a nice phrase to say that I am quite a BIGOT!' Of all men Christians can laugh along!

How do men fight fire? FIRE! How do men vent their Old Man hearts and its hurts? Through their hurt hearts!

The world can be divided up into two parts: those who, with a chip on their shoulder, are DELUDED into thinking that Moses is flattered by having HELPERS! ‘I see where YOU are wrong!’ ‘You didn’t REALLY....?!’ ‘Can you believed...’ Howzit go, Terrilyn? ‘Bless her heart! But she....!’ There’s one way to live in a world made by God the Creator; and that’s by the rules of That Creator and God!

OR, you are of the other variety: spitting on any revealed will of God; spitting ON God. (The Gospel’s go into nasty detail about people spitting on Jesus. No: on His FACE!)

And you should smile—at least inwardly, my dear ones—smile when those who wish to flaunt the Law and make a POINT of stomping on the Ten Commandments—to be FREE! To be INDEPENDENT! To be THEMSELVES!—

Do it in such a commanding and terrifying way, that you’re more frightened of today’s ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLE animals, than Israel was afeared of God Hissself at Sinai!

Why?

Because the LAW—ANY...LAW!—impresses and scares and separates and evaluates: good from bad, heart versus heart, bigot versus open-minded, faithful versus faithless.

But we heard the apostle state today:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;
 if we endure, we will also reign with him;
 if we deny him, he also will deny us;
 if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.

THERE—at the feet of That Man!—was the God Who seeks NOT our love; our attachment; our FAITH! ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all you have!’ LAW! Impressive. But HE heals without ANY THANKS AT ALL!

(I’m saved too-oo! You are save-ed too-oo!)

HERE—among those Whom the Spirit inhabits without FEAR!—

Here, at the Table of our Lord, the Breaking of the Bread: The God Who remains faithful; despite anyone’s judgment about who is faithful and who is not!

Luke 3 and verse 24: ‘Now, when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized, and was praying, etc.’ An UN-remarkable event, quite ordinary, like all those, confessing their sins and having them washed away in anticipation of His coming. But what did HEAVEN think of such an attitude, such a deed? ‘The heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”’

AND...WE have been baptized too! By the more-giving of This Man! Who heals our skin, our hearts, our bones, again and again. And Who does MORE; Who...is...MORE!

So, The Small Catechism of Doctor Martin Luther calls out with joy and faith for us to celebrate that baptism, OUR cleansing, OUR faith, OUR God, our Jesus! KNOWING—Luther did!, as the apostle himself!—that the GOSPEL cannot compete with the LAW, as far as men’s hearts go.

That’s the joy of our Baptism into Christ! HE cannot deny Himself! Even when WE are only thrilled when WE gain traction in life—diet, exercise, money, job, purpose, popularity, feelings, behavior, inter-personal-relationships—all LAW! All WORKS!

All US and OURS...

HE is still THRILLED so much about the Holy Spirit's washing of us, that Jesus has done and gone shot His-self off to heaven! To make sure the Promise is KEPT!

HE, the Master, is faithful to His Giving and His More and His Spirit and His Father.

Rejoice that you have been baptized at His authority, my dear ones; rejoice that your faith and saving are gifts from outside.

So much so: that we may rejoice that WE are NEVER going to be as thrilled about OUR Baptism as our Father in heaven, and His Spirit, are Thrilled that we are saved, and healed, and cleansed in the Name of Jesus! Amen!