

Sermon for September 6th, 2026
FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

Proverbs 4:10-23

- 10** Hear, my son, and accept my words,
that the years of your life may be many.
11 I have taught you the way of wisdom;
I have led you in the paths of uprightness.
12 When you walk, your step will not be hampered,
and if you run, you will not stumble.
13 Keep hold of instruction; do not let go;
guard her, for she is your life.
14 Do not enter the path of the wicked,
and do not walk in the way of the evil.
15 Avoid it; do not go on it;
turn away from it and pass on.
16 For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong;
they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble.
17 For they eat the bread of wickedness
and drink the wine of violence.
18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn,
which shines brighter and brighter until full day.
19 The way of the wicked is like deep darkness;
they do not know over what they stumble.
20 My son, be attentive to my words;
incline your ear to my sayings.
21 Let them not escape from your sight;
keep them within your heart.
22 For they are life to those who find them,
and healing to all their flesh.
23 Keep your heart with all vigilance,
for from it flow the springs of life.

Psalms 119:9-16

[Collect text in Bold]

- 9** How can a young man keep his way pure?
By guarding it according to your word.
10 With my whole heart I seek you;
let me not wander from your commandments!
11 I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.
12 Blessed are you, O LORD;
teach me your statutes!
13 With my lips I declare
all the rules of your mouth.
14 In the way of your testimonies I delight
as much as in all riches.

**15 I will meditate on your precepts
and fix my eyes on your ways.
16 I will delight in your statutes;
I will not forget your word.**

Galatians 5:16-24

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. **19** Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, **21** envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. **24** And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Luke 17:11-19

11 On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. **12** And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance **13** and lifted up their voices, 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 cleansed. **15** Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; **16** and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. **17** Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? **18** Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” **19** And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.”

Our text for meditation this Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity is on our Gospel reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

If you were to go through the one year lectionary, you might notice that the readings for each Sunday are connected. The men who designed the reading plan could see the parallel focus of each text between one or two selected themes. Our Old Testament reading from Proverbs 4 shows King Solomon exhorting his son to seek and follow wisdom; meanwhile our Psalm reading, eight verses from Psalm 119, tells young men where to *find* that wisdom in the Word; then we have our reading from Galatians, which shows us what we *get* from following the Word and its wisdom – the fruits of the Spirit. So when the minister is getting his sermon ready, he can preach on the connections between these passages, or he can select a text and elaborate on the finer points from there.

But every now and then one of the readings will be simply too dense for such a neat categorization. Our Gospel reading for today is not unified with the other texts by a singular theme, being simply too *rich* in meaning with all that it shows us. Jesus cleansing the ten lepers involves much more for us than a singular focus on the Word or the topic of wisdom or holy living in general. Instead, it is as though St. Luke invites us to *bathe* in the event to find ourselves cleansed and refreshed just as the lepers were. So instead of the typical sermon style one find here, let's just spend some time highlighting the different ways we can approach this miracle: in so doing, we will find the greatest benefit. However brief my highlights may be, let's enjoy some spiritual food for spiritual thought.

Jesus' Compassion, Power, and Faithfulness

First, we cannot miss Christ's compassion on display here. Ten lepers ask Him to heal them of their skin conditions. Under the Mosaic Law, someone with leprosy was cast out of society, unable to make sacrifices, unable to live a normal life with his neighbors at all.¹ To be a leper in Israel and Judah was to be in a sort of exile in place: no one wanted to touch you or associate with you, but you were not cast out from the nation. Our Lord heals these men because He knows exactly what they are going through, and He loves them just as much as He loves anyone else.

Not only that, but He shows His power in this moment as well. Jesus does not need to put His hands on someone to perform a miracle. In fact, He does not even need to *say* that He is healing them. To the contrary, it is as though He merely *thought* about it and suddenly they were cleansed. Occasionally you might hear some nonbeliever say that Jesus never claimed to be Divine; I would point them to this passage and ask them why He would even need to say it. Only the Creator of the world, who fashioned the universe by speaking it into existence, would be able to heal someone in this way. And remember, this is the first century we are speaking of here; no one other than God Himself would know enough about human skin and diseases to be able to identify and cure them. No one other than God would know about the molecules that would need to be rearranged, how to reverse cell damage, and how to do so without firing off the nervous system and leaving the leper in severe pain. While Jesus certainly *did* claim to be God,² passages like this demonstrate that He preferred to *show* that this was the case.

Not only this, but think of the faithfulness of Christ that is shown here. Not just faithful to His promises toward man, He also is faithful to the very Word that we all know, read and love. He tells the lepers to go to the priests, which is exactly what the Law of Moses commands someone to do when they are healed of their leprosy. Before they can bring sacrifices to the Temple, they must be examined. My friends, this assures us that Jesus is not some “revolutionary” as modern liberal theologians try to say. He never introduced new doctrine; rather, He knew the Word, followed the Word, and taught the Word because He *is* the Logos from Whom we get the Scriptures in the first place, as St. John says.³ Though He came to fulfill the Law, liberating us all from its accusations, He never preached against what our Lord established.

The Samaritan and the Law

But about that Law... now we arrive at the lepers themselves. Nine of them were Jews, one was a Samaritan. We must not criticize the nine Jews too quickly; they were under the Law, and thus they felt pressure to get to Jerusalem as quickly as possible to present themselves to the priests. My friends, this is just what things were like for people under the Law: there are no excuses for disobedience whatsoever. They may have been grateful that their leprosy was cleansed, but they were likely afraid of being punished if they went back to thank Jesus. After all, there are plenty of times when men with good intentions ended up being *killed* by the Lord for acting on them. When David had the Ark of the Covenant carried to Jerusalem, the cart carrying the Ark slipped back and a man named Uzzah caught it so that it would not fall or be damaged: God killed Uzzah on the spot.⁴ Later on when the kingdom split and God sent a prophet to condemn the evil king Jeroboam, that prophet was told to go straight to Judah without stopping; another prophet lied to him to get him to receive hospitality, and so God had a lion eat the first prophet.⁵ The Law permits no deviation no matter how small. So when Jesus, whom the lepers believed was a prophet, told them to go to the priests, they understood that to mean *right now* with no stopping.

1 The laws concerning leprosy are found in Leviticus 13-14

2 John 10:30

3 John 1:1-14

4 2 Samuel 6:5-11

5 1 Kings 13:11-32

The Samaritan on the other hand was under no such requirements. The Samaritans had a different priesthood and a different law, with no Temple to speak of;⁶ here this non-Samaritan man, Jesus, tells him to go show himself to the priests – but which priests should he go to? He cannot go to the Levitical priesthood in Jerusalem, as they were under orders to *reject* Samaritans. He cannot go to the Samaritan priests, because they would not honor Jesus as a true and healing prophet; they would hear that Jesus told the Samaritan to go to the priests in Jerusalem, and then refuse to honor what happened! Imagine, a Samaritan man being cast out by his coethnics because they would be convinced Jesus was a sorcerer.

So the man was in a bind, and he must have realized it before turning back. The Samaritan cannot go to the Jerusalem Temple, and cannot go to his now former priests. The Law isn't helping him! All he can do is go back to Jesus. So he returns with gratitude, praising the Lord. He bows down to Jesus and thanks Him, recognizing and confessing that He is the Lord. This man rightly concluded that if the Law will not be of any help, and if the command cannot be followed, then all that is left is faith in the one who healed him.

Conclusion: Faith and Thanksgiving

The situation that the Samaritan finds himself in is not unlike where men find themselves today. The Law cannot help us, and we cannot fulfill its commandments. No man can hope to fulfill all the commandments, not even just the core Ten Commandments. Even if we *could* we would still be in trouble, because the means of absolving sin from the Law are all destroyed; there is no earthly altar, tabernacle, or priesthood, no way of expiating one's sins by blood sacrifice. Even worse, we Gentiles do not belong to old Israel, so to the Old Covenant we are nothing but foreigners; we would be rejected the same way the Samaritan would have been if he went to Jerusalem to be examined by the priests. What can we possibly do if we want any hope for salvation? Ah, we must do as the Samaritan leper did; go to the one who healed us. Christ who died for our sakes, taking away the leprosy of sin and the curse of death which was upon our heads. We go to Him who fulfilled the Law with His own Blood, so that its strictures may no longer apply to us. As Christ freed the lepers from their disease, He gives us liberty; let us then go to Him at all times with thanksgiving and faith.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

⁶ The Samaritan Pentateuch makes some polemic and illegitimate additions to the original Mosaic Law. John Hyrcanus destroyed the original Samaritan Temple in 110 BC.