

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

In our Gospel text, as Jesus is heading to Jerusalem, he goes straight through Galilee and Samaria. He enters into a village, exactly where is not clear, and there ten lepers meet Him. They stand at a distance, according to the law, and cry out not Kyrie Eleison — Lord, have mercy, or Christe Eleison — Christ, have mercy, as we sing, but Ἰησοῦ ἐπιστάτα, ἐλέησον — “*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.*” These ten had probably heard about the teacher who could heal many “*of their infirmities*”—even leprosy, for He had done it before, and “*the report about him [had been spread] abroad*” (Luke 5:15).

Most translations translate ἐπιστάτα as “master,” and that’s good, but where Luke uses ἐπιστάτα, in parallel accounts in the Synoptics, other words are often used — “teacher” and “rabbi” and notably “Lord.” That’s why these ten lepers were crying out to Jesus, not that He might show Himself to be a rabbi and teach them something, but that He might manifest His divine power as Lord and heal them.

They had come to the right place, for Jesus was indeed Lord — and He had exercised this lordly dominion over all things: over wind and sea, over demons and unclean spirits, and over blind eyes, stopped up ears, and weak limbs that could not support the body. Jesus was more than “*the LORD, mighty in battle,*” as David proclaimed (Ps. 24:8); He was “*the LORD ... gracious and merciful*” and great were His works (Ps. 111:4, 2).

Indeed, He was full of mercy, and He bestowed it upon the ten lepers. He commanded them, “*Go and show yourselves to the priests,*” and they all obeyed as if they had already been cleansed. After all, they didn’t need to go to the priests to be declared leprous. That had already been established. They would only need to go to the priests again to be declared clean, to do the ritual washings, to be anointed with oil, and to offer up the sacrifice of atonement, the burnt offering, and the grain offering. It was quite a process to be declared clean of leprosy (Lev. 14).

These ten were not disappointed. “[A]s they went they were cleansed”; they were healed of this dread disease. Praise the Lord, more specifically, praise Jesus the Lord, for Jesus did not do miracles merely to show mercy; He did them to bear witness about Himself, for who could do such marvelous things except God Himself, in this case, God’s Son? As Moses said, “*what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours*” (Deut. 3:24)? Paul said that God showed mercy even to the Gentiles, that He might not leave “*himself without witness*” (Acts 14:17). And John testifies that “*Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name*” (John 20:30-31).

For although Jesus, *“the sun of righteousness,”* came *“with healing in its wings”* (Mal. 4:2) — He came opening eyes and unstopping ears, He came strengthening legs and loosing tongues — yet the main healing that Jesus came to bring was eternal. Jesus Himself says that His purpose was to serve us for the sake of salvation. *“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”* (Mark 10:45). And St. Paul says: *“The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”* (1 Tim. 1:15). Jesus came not just to show mercy on earth, but especially to bestow grace unto eternal life ... a salvation by grace received through faith.

That’s good, for not many today are afflicted with the disease of leprosy, but we are all afflicted with the disease of sin. Sometimes, it affects our physical bodies, but it always affects our soul. By it we are unclean, and, as we confess, because of sin we “justly deserve [God’s] temporal and eternal punishment.”

But Jesus came to fulfill those things that make for our cleanness. He came to offer up the ultimate sacrifice of atonement for sin. Indeed, the Jewish animal sacrifices all pointed ahead to the sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God which far surpassed them: *“how much more ...”* says the writer to the Hebrews, *“how much more”* than those animal sacrifices, *“how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God”* (Heb. 9:14). Jesus came to shed His blood that *“cleanses us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7), because He knew that *“under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins”* (Heb. 9:13). And so, *“we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”* (Heb. 10:10).

More than that, Jesus came to give to us a washing that delivers this cleansing blood to us. And so, like what Izaiah was granted today in his baptism, we *“draw near ... with our hearts [that have been] sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water”* (Heb. 10:22). We *“draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith”* (Heb. 10:22), thankful for the faith the Holy Spirit has worked in us through this water and the word and is now working in Izaiah. We *“draw near,”* returning here to give thanks to Him by whose blood we have been made well ... by which we have been saved. We *“draw near”* as those who *“have died with him”* in Holy Baptism, trusting according to His promise that *“we will also live with him.”* We *“draw near”* as those who want to *“endure”* to the end, that we might be saved and *“reign with him.”*

Isn’t that what parents want for their children ... to live eternally in heaven, to reign with Jesus? Isn’t that why Izaiah was brought to this font today? Because we

want life for our children? We want our children to know the truth, and to follow that path? Isn't that why we "*train up [our children] in the way [they] should go*" (Prov. 22:6), so that, like Ruth of old, they will boldly say: "*where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God*"? Yes! And we know that baptized into Christ, we become "*a people for his own possession ... God's people*" (1 Pet. 2:9-10); in Christ, we know that our lodging is "*a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*" (2 Cor. 5:1). We want that for our children.

Of course, children grow up, and sometimes they fall away from the faith given in baptism. They could become "*faithless*" at some point in the future. What then? Remember that our faithlessness does not undo what Christ has done for us by His cross and resurrection. His blood shed was a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2). And our faithlessness does not undo our baptism. It remains valid; God's promises in baptism remain.

In spite of our faithlessness, God "*remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.*" God does not remove His promise from the word-filled, Spirit-filled, cleansing water of baptism. It's so for all of us. If we have fallen, we can return, humbly, falling on our face before the Lord Jesus, knowing that if "*we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9). And returning, give thanks, for the Lord will say to us: "*Rise and go your way.*" What way? The way of faithfulness again, the way of thanksgiving again, of partaking of the meal of thanksgiving served here again today, the way of "*do[ing] justice, and ... lov[ing] kindness, and ... walk[ing] humbly with your God*" (Micah 6:8). And returning in faith, Jesus will say to you: "*your faith has [saved you].*"

God grant it to us all ...

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.