

10.12.2025 Pentecost 18

Pastor Timothy McKenzie

2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15; Psalm 111; 2 Timothy 2:8-15; Luke 17:11-19

“Thankfulness in all things”

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

Each week during Stewardship 2026, we are hearing the voices of our community partners and the work they do in our church. Their voices often contain words of thanksgiving. Like them, today’s readings also contain voices of thanksgiving to God for healing, hope, and encouragement in their lives.

In each of today’s readings, healing brought about a new relationship with God and community. Naaman praised the God of Israel; Paul offered his entire life for Christ; and a Samaritan man healed, returned to Jesus thanking him.

These stories make me wonder, “How thankful are we?” Do we always say thank you to those who have helped heal, forgive, and welcome us? Most of us probably think of ourselves as thankful people and yet often we may never acknowledge the blessings we have received. We may intend to say thank you, but life gets in the way, like seed sown on thorny ground, the cares and worries of life often choke any words of thanks we may have intended to say.

Today’s gospel tells us that nine out of ten people who were healed did not say a word of thanks to the one who had healed them. These ten people kept a distance because of a contagious skin disease that made them a threat to the health of their families and communities. Because of their illness, they were pushed to the very margins, perhaps living on food left for them by loved ones at a distance. Their illness also made them impure and unable to take part in the ritual worship of their communities. The closest comparison we can make might be the pandemic, when COVID was still very contagious and life-threatening. It tore families and communities apart. Sick people were quarantined on the margins of society, often dying alone apart from the love and care of their families and communities. Over one million people died in the nation alone, yet today we rarely hear about them or hear words of thanks for the lives they lived among us.

Jesus’ words, “*Were not ten made clean? So where are the other nine?*” suggest a profound sense of ingratitude toward a renewed gift of life. These nine people missed the greatest moment in their life, a turning point, in which they could have thanked God for all of God’s gifts to them.

Yet everything in this story turns on the nameless Samaritan man who “saw” that he was healed. This verb, “to see,” implies the awakening of insight into God’s presence in his life. Seeing that he was healed doesn’t simply mean noticing he was made well, it means seeing a blessing from God – and returning to offer thanks. Do you see God’s merciful blessings, daily returning to God and offering thanksgiving for the many blessings you have received, without which, you would not be

the person you are?

To emphasize this, Jesus says, “*Where are the other nine? Did none of them return to give glory to God except this foreigner?*” Like Naaman, the Aramean army commander healed by Elisha, the Samaritan was a non-Jew, yet he praised Jesus the Jew. In understanding his healing as God’s presence, he overcame a religious and cultural divide between himself and Jesus. This tells us something quite profound about Jesus: He offers healing, forgiveness and friendship to any and all who call upon him. Jesus’ love, mercy, and compassion are signs of who Jesus is for all people.

Today’s gospel tells us that Jesus was traveling to Jerusalem via the region between Samaria and Galilee, a region that would have been a mixture of cultures, religions, and customs. What is both difficult and yet crucial for us to see is that Jesus healed all who called upon him. In the gospels, Jesus didn’t check religion, nationality, skin color, or gender – he healed all who came to him.

Jesus also didn’t avoid the margins between societies. Jesus understood, as a good friend once said, we live “in a crisscross of geographic and cultural movements.” More than ever today we experience crossroads of peoples, nations, and religions that should make us profoundly grateful for our shared humanity. When we see ourselves living only within the borders of one nation, one family, or one religion, we are in danger of losing sight of the God who loves all people. If the gospels tell us nothing else, Jesus walked the margins between nations, families, and religions, not withholding grace because of religion or nation, but offering grace and healing to all the people of this world.

Paul writes about this in 2 Timothy with the words of an ancient Christian hymn, “*The saying is sure: 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 will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful —he cannot deny himself.*” Jesus remains faithful to his work as the Mediator between heaven and earth, between sin and forgiveness, sickness and health, between all nations, nationalities, skin colors, genders and identities. He is the *Salvator Mundi*, the Savior of the world. Jesus is the incarnation of God’s love for this world, and like the nine out of ten, sometimes we don’t see his healing among the nations. Are we among the 90% who do not offer thanks to the one in whom all things hold together?

As Jesus came to walk between and among all people, you can count on Jesus to be with you. He will answer, strengthen, and forgive you. Can Jesus count on you to work with him in all things? Paul’s baptismal language reminds us that if we have died with him, we live raised with him in this life – in the work he does through us for all people. This is what Paul did, crisscrossing geographies, cultures, and religions proclaiming a message of Jesus alive with healing for the nations.

As Paul writes, Jesus Christ is faithful; he cannot deny himself. He is God’s love for the world, and through faith, he is incarnate in you. If you have died with him in baptism, you will also live

raised with him in this life. New life with Christ begins with a life of thanksgiving, and a life of enduring service for others. Yet Paul's words of caution are difficult: if we deny him, he will also deny us. He will say, "*I do not know you*" (Mt. 7:21-23). Are you thankful for the healing of sin, pride, and hatred? Live as his healing for others in the crisscrossing geographies and cultures.

At what moments in your life have you experienced healing? Perhaps you experienced physical healing that was an answer to prayer. Perhaps you experienced the healing of forgiveness when you felt unforgivable. Perhaps you experienced the healing of an unconditional welcome after living on the margins of community. In experiencing healing, forgiveness and welcome, what did you do? Did you return to God with thanksgiving, offering your life in service to others? Thankfulness in all things turns us toward life as being for others.

Today's gospel opens with five words that sound like an insignificant stage direction, "*On the way to Jerusalem...*" These words remind us that Jesus was traveling to Jerusalem on a mission to reveal God's love, crucified between two criminals. As Jesus traveled to Jerusalem and his cross, he healed everyone who called upon and reached out to him. His cross continues to heal all who seek him with resurrection and newness of life.

To be thankful in all things is to return to him. Turning to him is *metanoia*, because turning to him changes the direction you walk in this world.

Jesus lives raised for the healing of the nations. He lives in the crisscross of nations, cultures, and peoples. He lives to bless the world through you.

Imitate him. Daily return to him with thanksgiving as you live for others. You can count on him. Can he count on you? Amen.