

Epworth Chapel on the Green
October 14, 2012
Pentecost 20/Harvest Festival
Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander

Deuteronomy 8:6-18
Psalm 113:1-8
2 Corinthians 9:6-15
Luke 17:11-19

Our Gospel lesson today has Jesus on the border between Galilee and Samaria, as he makes his way toward Jerusalem and the Cross. He enters a village and encounters 10 lepers who cry out for his healing and his mercy.

He instructs them to go and show themselves to the priests. The text tells us that “as they went, their leprosy disappeared.” Note how their miracle of healing was tied up with their acting in faith.

At any rate, the focus in this text this morning seems to be less on the miracle itself, and more on the *reaction* to it. Of the ten lepers who Jesus touches, one returns to Jesus because his heart is bursting with gratitude.

Jesus is no doubt glad for this man’s return, but it leaves him wondering about the other nine who have been healed. Where are *they*?

This is perhaps another reminder to us that although God’s blessings are never commonplace, we are often tempted to treat them as such. This is why the writer of Deuteronomy sternly warns the children of Israel as they prepare to enter the Promised Land, reminding them that God is the source of all they have and all

that they are. *Living life from a posture of gratitude is the calling of all God's people.*

Add to this our epistle lesson today from 2 Corinthians, and we learn further that our gratitude is based in the fact that God owns everything, and we are merely stewards. He blesses us in order that we might bless others. He is generous with us in order that we might be generous with others.

In a sense, this day when we celebrate the Harvest Festival is a way for us to enact and embody the truth of the Old Testament lesson from Deuteronomy this morning. By bringing our gifts, and by sharing together this day and focusing on God's abundant provision, our minds are sharpened and our hearts are softened, and we encounter the antidote to ingratitude. By doing what we do today, we "remember the Lord" as the biblical writer calls on us to do.

In the spirit of our Gospel lesson today, let us not focus merely on God's miracles among us. Let us focus also on our *response* to what God has done. Let us be grateful for our fellowship with one another. Let us rejoice at what God is doing in this place and through this people.

As you come to the Lord's Table this morning, come with faith and with gratitude. Come as those who understand that God's blessing in your life should never become commonplace. Come as those whose attitude is "thanks be to God,"

for all that we are and all that we enjoy. Come as those who know that we've been blessed in order that we might bless others.

In short, come this morning as those who wish to be conduits of God's abundance. Then go forth as those in whom Christ is at work to touch and bless the world.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.