

Trinity XV

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Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[0 : 00] Most of you are well aware that I was not raised as an Anglican, nor did I have any connection to a liturgical background.

The word Catholic was one that I seldom heard unless it was used in some derogatory manner. Worship was about the pastor making the hair stand up on the back of the neck, not only by what he said, but how he said it.

The goal of worship was telling God how great he was over and over and over again in song, while striving to be sincere, which meant feeling God's presence in some type of inner emotion or experience.

It was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great German theologian who lost his life in trying to stop the deranged and lunatic Adolf Hitler, who helped me understand my misgivings in American evangelicalism.

In his little book entitled Psalms, the Prayer Book of the Bible, Bonhoeffer says, Let me say that again.

[1 : 28] Bonhoeffer says, God desires us to worship him from the riches of his word rather than from the poverty of our own hearts. And here's the point to the sermon for this morning.

God is the first and primary actor in worship. God is the first and primary actor in worship.

We are then called to respond to his love by living a life of continual thanksgiving for his goodness and for his grace.

God is the first and primary actor in worship. This morning we heard the story from Luke chapter 17 of ten lepers who had been ostracized and left all alone.

Having leprosy in the ancient world meant one was unclean and could not come in contact with others, and so they were put in their own community in a colony where they could not have interaction with others.

[2 : 33] We are told that these ten ostracized lepers saw Jesus and they cried out, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us.

These lepers recognized a fundamental truth that we must all embrace, and that is, left to our own, we are all destitute because we are all diseased with sin.

We are alienated from our God because of sin. We do not have leprosy per se. We're not ostracized into a colony, but we are sick from the disease of sin that permeates throughout our bodies, our being, and brings us down to the grave.

But Jesus did not ignore these lepers, and he doesn't ignore you. He tells these lepers to go and to show themselves to the priest, who could then determine whether or not they were clean, that is, whether or not they had been healed.

And while they're making their way to the priest, their grotesque skin was transformed into flesh without any defect or deformity.

[4 : 02] They had been healed by the word of God that had come in human flesh, in the person of Jesus the Christ.

But nine of these leaping and joyful lepers simply went their own way, never returning to their great physician. But one of these lepers, who would have been considered unclean by the very fact that he was a Samaritan, forgot about leprosy, this Samaritan, this leper, came back to Jesus.

And what did he do? Well, in verses 15 and 16 of Luke chapter 17, we read, when he saw that he was healed. He returned.

And with a loud voice, he glorified God and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks.

Giving him thanks. Friends, we are to be like the Samaritan, this leper, who gave thanks to God for this miraculous healing.

[5 : 18] Instead of coming to God, telling him how great he is all the time, we need to come to the Lord as a beggar, as one in need of God's mercy.

We sing or we say, Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us in the Kyrie every week in the liturgy.

Why do we need God's mercy? Because also, we say in the liturgy, we have sinned in thought, word, and deed.

Because we are not worthy to gather up the crumbs that fall from the master's table. So we approach God like the Samaritan, this leper, fully prostrate, prostrate, giving thanks to God for his mercy and his grace.

And then we enter into that great thanksgiving because our Lord's property is always to have mercy. Mercy asked in humility is mercy given in abundance by our gracious God.

[6 : 29] And the pinnacle of where this all happens is at the altar during Mass. We come as beggars.

We come to God recognizing our own sin. We are then fed like kings and queens with the life of Jesus that restores our life to God and then makes us vessels of his grace and his mercy to the world.

We as cleansed children of God are to go to those still alienated from God because of the disease of sin. And we are called to share the love of God in word and in deed that is bestowed upon these people, these precious sheep by the master physician, Jesus.

The God who came to this earth, his very purpose was to take our sin upon himself and thereby impart to us his righteousness, his peace.

And by God's grace, we witness the great healing of the diseased through the waters of holy baptism, which connects the sick to the restored and the renewed life given only in Jesus, the Christ.

[8 : 06] Our liturgy speaks to what we heard from our gospel text this morning. We cry out to the Lord for mercy. We ask that the Lord have mercy upon us.

And our Lord acts not only pronouncing or announcing our pardon of sin, but giving us his very own body and blood so that we now dwell in him as the liturgy says and he in us.

And our life in Christ is now to be a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God where we are no longer trying to convince God and more importantly trying to convince ourselves on how much we love him.

No, we participate in love because we participate in God through the rhythm of humility and confession and the cleansing and the participation in Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

And the word Eucharist literally means thanksgiving or Eucharist means to give thanks. It is our participation in the life and love of our God.

[9 : 18] It is our cleansing. It is our healing. Friends, worship is not about us. It's about the God who extends his love to us in Jesus Christ who restores us, who feeds us, who joins us to the great family, the whole church in giving thanks.

and this happens in that sacred meal of the Holy Eucharist. And this same God then sends us out as his restored body, no longer suffering from the disease and havoc of sin, but now radiating the love of Christ to the world as we are his hands, his feet, his mouth.

and we are to give him thanks to live a life of thanksgiving for all that he has done, for all that he is doing, and for all that he will do now and forevermore.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.