

Trinity XIV

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Preacher: Father Randall Russell

[0 : 00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Let me begin by stating the obvious.

We are all different. We are not all the same. Yet despite our different backgrounds and various opinions, why are we all here this morning?

Hopefully we are all here for the same reason. Hopefully we are all here in order to receive the same mercy and to worship the same Savior.

Which brings us to this morning's Gospel. For in this morning's Gospel, our Lord heals ten men who, despite their differences, were all united in their need for God's mercy and healing.

But only one, only one returned to give thanks. And unlike the other nine, this morning's Gospel makes it a point to tell us that he was a Samaritan.

[1 : 09] And why is that important? Well, it is important because in our Lord's Day, Jews and Samaritans didn't really get along.

In fact, in our Lord's Day, most Jews hated the Samaritans because the Samaritans were looked at as traitors to the Jewish people.

For in 721 BC, the Assyrian Empire conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. And afterward, many Jews who remained in the north married and even had children with some of the Assyrians, thus forming the Samaritans, a group whose ethnic origins were neither fully Jewish nor fully Assyrian, but were actually a mixture of the two.

And since the Assyrians were also the hated enemy of the southern kingdom of Judah, many Jews living in the south viewed those Samaritans living in the north as traitors because they were the offspring of a group of northern Jews who sided with the enemy and abandoned what those in the south considered to be any authentic Jewish way of life.

But at least for 10 men, nine who were Jews and one who was a Samaritan, none of those differences mattered.

[2 : 45] And why? Because all 10 men, nine Jews and one Samaritan had been shunned and labeled by everyone as unclean, untouchable, and unwelcome because of their leprosy.

Which apparently was also how all 10 men saw one another as well. For each man no longer saw himself as a Jew or a Samaritan, but simply as a fellow leper.

A fellow leper in need of God's mercy and healing for they were united in their infirmity. They had become one in their need for God's mercy and healing.

Yet as soon as all 10 are healed, what happens next? Those old divisions suddenly return, with nine Jews going one way and one Samaritan going another.

which causes our Lord to ask, were there not 10 cleansed? But where are the other nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner, this stranger to the land of Judah, this Samaritan?

[4 : 07] However, it's easy to understand why the nine would feel free to go and show themselves to the priests in the temple of Jerusalem because after they were healed, they were no longer lepers, but were once again, of course, healthy Jews.

Yet the one who returns to give our Lord thanks was not a Jew. He was a Samaritan. And in those days, a Samaritan would not have been welcome in Jerusalem because he would have been viewed as a traitor and as an enemy to many of the people living in Judah.

But it's also not like this one Samaritan had nowhere else to go except back to Jesus. Remember, remember how in John chapter 4, the Samaritan woman at the well told Jesus while he was traveling through Samaria, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet for our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the place where we ought to worship.

Well, she said that because the Samaritans had their own temple where they could go and worship God on Mount Gerizim in northern Israel, which was Samaria.

And that one lone Samaritan who Jesus healed in this morning's gospel could very well have gone there and shown himself to the priests there in Samaria because that is where the Samaritans worshiped Jehovah.

[5 : 49] But he did not do that. Instead, this one lone Samaritan abandons the temple built with hands in order to approach the greater temple not built with hands, which is our Lord's body, so that he could worship and give all glory to God in the person of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And that is why our Lord tells them, arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well. Because, dear Christian friends, that faith is our faith as well.

For today, we do not believe that God may only be worshipped and adored in a temple in Jerusalem or a temple in Samaria. But, and this is important, but may only, only be worshipped and adored in the person of Jesus Christ.

For apart from him, there is no other God. Christ Jesus and Christ alone is the way, the truth, and the life.

For no one, no one, he says, comes to the Father except through him, except through Jesus. So today, as we all make our way up to the Lord's altar, in order to receive the same man's mercy and receive the same man's healing, as did those ten lepers so long ago, let us not forget to give thanks, to return and give thanks, as so many often do.

[7 : 37] And let us also not forget to remain one. For despite our various backgrounds and personal opinions, only one thing, one thing in life truly matters.

And that is our allegiance, our faithfulness, and our devotion to Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God. For it is in his image that we were created. and it is by his mercy, his love, and his peace that we are called to live together as one.

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