

Sermon
21 Pentecost—Proper 23-C
October 13, 2013
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Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7
Psalm 66:1-11
2 Timothy 2:8-15
Luke 17:11-19

Have you ever wondered why Jesus heals so many people in the Gospels?

Some people say it's because he is showing the world his power so they will pay attention to his message. It's the reason the Super Bowl MVP is picked to say he's going to Disney World. We should listen to Jesus because he can do all these amazing things.

But I think this gets the matter wrong. Jesus is not showing off himself, but rather he is showing off God—Showing off God's power and passion for sick, broken human beings.

And showing off God's presence in the here and now. In the paragraph immediately after today's Gospel Jesus says, "The kingdom of God is among you".

Jesus is showing off God's power, passion, and presence in our lives here and now. The healings are signs that it is God's intention to heal you and me.

And God knows we need this healing! We may be physically healthy this morning but I suspect I'm not the only one who feels the tug of the 10,000 things that fracture our minds and our lives. We experience life as fragmented and this fragmentation pulls us apart—as individuals and communities.

The ego sees all these separate pieces and works 24/7 to hold it all together—I mean someone has to hold together job, and house and carpools and sports teams and paying bills and buying groceries, on and on.

Someone has got to step up to the plate and control this chaos, right? Isn't that what Mothers are for?

This is what Martha is feeling when she is stressing out about dinner when Jesus says to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried about so many things; but only one thing is needful."

Jesus sees us pulled apart and is desperate for us to be able to see what he sees.

Of course Jesus sees the 10,000 things but what he also sees is what is underneath them, above them, and surrounding them all—he sees the power, passion, and presence of the One True Life, the ground of Being, holding all things together in what Thomas Merton calls "the hidden ground of love".

Jesus sees creation filled with the glory of God. Sometimes this is described as a non-dual seeing-in which the many are held together in the heart of the One.

Jesus sees his disciples and he sees the 10 sick lepers crying for mercy. Yet, surrounding them all he sees the Hidden Ground of Love uniting them together in the One True Life which is God.

Therefore according to William Shannon "The goal of any true spirituality...is to make us aware—aware not only of God but of ourselves and of the wide world of people and things. Becoming aware is really an awakening: we are roused from the sleep of spiritual apartheid and we become truly alive."

Saint Augustine puts it best: “The whole purpose of life is to restore to health the eye of the heart whereby God may be seen.”

When this healing begins to happen it totally reframes our lives. Reframing is when we change the way we look at things. It's what a good therapist will help us do: like the woman who had three bad car wrecks in a month and she put on it the frame that said, “God is mad at me.” Her view changed when she took off that negative frame and put on a positive one that said, “God must be looking out for me because I should have been seriously injured.”

We frame life like the way Thomas Hobbes famously did when he said life was “nasty, brutish, and short.”

Jesus, who has a Biblical view of life, sees the world set inside the God frame: at the beginning of creation God pronounces all things are very good , giving what is called the Original Blessing. God makes covenants with us in spite of our sins; God is present in the world healing and restoring us to our place as God's children.

Jesus sees this frame so the world he sees is very different from the one we see. Yes, more than most, Jesus sees the profound suffering of the poor and sick, but this is set within the God frame that is slowly moving to transform suffering into a world joyous and exciting, and a world that is a safe place to live and move and have our being.

So I ask you, what frame do you have around your picture of the world?

Is the frame friendly or unfriendly?

God soaked or godforsaken?

When we are filled with stress, struggle, and suffering you can bet we've unconsciously put on the godforsaken frame.

Jesus comes to heal how we see life so he tells the 10 lepers to go show themselves to the priests, which Scripture says they are to do only once they are clean. But they have enough faith in him to obey and so they set off to show the priests their unhealed skin which changes on the way.

All ten act out this faith. All ten are healed of their skin disease.

Many of us have had a skin disease and we go to the dermatologist and take the treatment and we are healed. We know how good that feels for a time, but it doesn't usually cause us to reframe our life. We remain the same anxious person wondering when the next disease is going to crop up.

Yet, one of the lepers gets a second, deeper healing---the eye of his heart is opened, so he returns, throws himself at Jesus feet, thanking him, and praising God.

In the language I used several weeks ago, Christ removes the frame of scarcity and gives him the frame of abundance and so liberates him from himself.

Jesus says to him "your faith has saved you."

Can this also happen to us? Can our faith save us?

-----If it's faith in the right person.

I know we Episcopalians get nervous around faith language. We're not too sure about calling Jesus Lord and as Americans we resist calling anyone our Master.

But the truth is if Jesus isn't our Lord and Master it means someone, or something else is---something like secular capitalism or blind nationalism, or raging narcissism.

When we can say internally that Jesus is my Master then all of life is properly reordered, because we are all creatures who function best when not in rebellion against, but in harmony with our creator.

Only when the ego finally gives up the struggle do we realize everything is God's—100% belongs to God including ourselves, our souls and bodies.

We are stewards not of our healing but of God's healing, of God's abundance, not our own.

Around stewardship time the ego struggles with the idea of giving any of **its** money to God.

When Christ has reframed our universe we can't believe our good fortune that of the 100% that belongs to God, we get to be stewards of 90% and return only 10% into the stewardship of the Christ's Church for the spread of God's Kingdom.

We know the twice healed leper in today's story is transformed because he is so grateful. Gratitude is the sign that a new frame has been put around our lives.

This is the deep healing Jesus comes to give us.

Let us pray for the grace to accept this healing from our Lord and Master and to share our gratitude with the world.