

“Lord, Have Mercy on Us”

Each week there are numerous people that we include in the Prayer of the Church – largely, prayers for healing. There are people who have been struggling with cancer for a long time – and people as young as little baby Hudson. They all have needs and have requested our prayers. And as I often tell people – we pray for “all the sick” in the Prayer of the Church – whether we mention them by name, or not.

All of these people for which we pray have both physical and spiritual needs. When we pray for health and healing – we pray that this would be according God’s will – knowing that He is good and gracious, but also knowing that He has not promised to heal all our diseases and remove all suffering.

Spiritually speaking, we know that His will is – that all would believe in Jesus Christ and therefore have everlasting life. So, our prayer is always that they would be brought to faith, or preserved in faith towards Christ – for in Him, they have the forgiveness of all their sins, they have life and salvation.

No matter what happens to their body in this life – in Christ, they have eternal life. In Christ they have the certainty that their body will be raised to life again on the Last Day to live forever. And so we pray, “Lord, have mercy.”

We are much like the Ten Lepers who cry out – “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” Obviously, they have physical needs – but they have spiritual needs as well. Their leprosy afflicted their bodies with dead and dying tissue. They were “as good as dead.”

But their leprosy also made them ceremonially unclean. They were not able to come into the presence of the Lord in the Temple – and they were cut off from their families and communities as well.

So, they cry out to Jesus for mercy – and He hears and answers their prayer. He gives them His Word – which they hear and believe. And as they made their way to the priests and the Temple in Jerusalem – they were healed.

Jesus sends them to the priests because that is how God promised to deal with leprosy in the Old Testament. His servants, the priests, would examine them – verifying and declaring them to be clean. They were the Lord’s means by which He restored lepers to Himself – and to their families and communities as well.

Jesus, by His Word, has healed them – giving them a whole new life. We don’t really know what the nine did, but we presume they went to the priests – were declared to be clean – and went back to their restored and new lives.

But we do know what one of them did. That one – a Samaritan (often despised by the Jews) – came back to Jesus. Jesus commends this one, and asks – “Where are the [other] nine?”

This one, a Samaritan – makes the connection. He realizes the gift that has been given and received – and he gives thanks to God. Realizing the source of his healing, he returns to Jesus and falls at HIS feet – praising God.

By faith, he realizes that Jesus is God in the flesh. By faith, he realizes that the God of the Temple is the One who is right here before His very eyes.

It is so easy to focus on the physical miracle that this leper has received – as we often focus only on the physical health of the ones for whom we pray. But Jesus has given Him spiritual gifts as well.

In our text this morning, Jesus says to the Samaritan – “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.” Yes, he’s healed of his leprosy – but the word that Jesus uses is the SALVATION word – literally, “your faith has SAVED you.”

The faith of which Jesus speaks is a faith that is created by His Word and promise – a faith that God the Holy Spirit works in this “as good as dead” man. It is a faith that hears God’s Word and believes that Jesus could heal him – a faith that looks and clings to Jesus Christ alone.

That is how HIS faith “saved” him. The Samaritan leper didn’t trust in himself – he didn’t have faith in HIS FAITH. No, the object of his faith – the thing that he believed in, that he trusted in, that he looked to for all good – was Jesus.

In the midst of his sinful, fallen state – in the despair and hopelessness of his sick condition – in his life cut off from family and friends and God Himself – he believes in Jesus.

Jesus speaks these words into our ears this very day, so that we – with all our physical and spiritual maladies – would cry out to the Lord, saying, “Lord, have mercy on us.” “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me,” He promises. Faith hears and believes what the Lord has promised.

The faith that the Holy Spirit creates and sustains in you – looks to Jesus – it desires that His will would be done. We pray for health and healing – but ultimately – we pray that He may sustain us in saving faith throughout all our days. And so, like that Samaritan leper – we fall at the feet of Jesus to praise God, and to receive His everlasting healing.

In the Old Testament – the Lord prescribed that His priests should declare that the leper is clean and restored to new life. Today, you come to church – with all your leprous sins – with the sins that divide your family and separate you from God and one another – you come as one who is “as good as dead” – and you fall at the feet of Jesus.

You fall at the feet of Jesus to hear the living voice of God who cleanses you. You fall at the feet of Jesus who washes you in His blood. You fall at His feet and receive His medicine of immortality, His very own Body and Blood – which gives you a whole new life, restored to God and to one another.

So even now, we cry out – Lord, have mercy on us – and He hears and answers our prayer. As His servant, I declare to you – that all your sin is forgiven, and in Christ you have life everlasting – in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.