

Three Chopt Presbyterian Church  
Dr. Brenda Halbrooks, preaching  
October 14, 2007  
Luke 17:11-19  
On Seeking the Common Good  
11:00 a.m. Transcript

## **Luke 17:11-19**

<sup>11</sup>On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup>As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, <sup>13</sup>they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" <sup>14</sup>When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. <sup>15</sup>Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. <sup>16</sup>He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup>Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? <sup>18</sup>Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" <sup>19</sup>Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

Many of you know that my oldest daughter Anna is spending a year in Germany as an exchange student. She received a scholarship to participate in a program that is a collaborative venture between the U.S. Congress and the German Bundestag and she is living with a host family for an entire year. It is way too long.

Before she left, we decided that I would put together a Facebook so that she and I could keep track of each other through our Facebook pages. If you don't know what a Facebook is, ask a teenager. So I put together a Facebook and she let me be her friend and I could see her pictures and we could exchange posts and emails and so forth. But once she got to Germany and became immersed in the life of the teenagers there, it turns out that there is a German equivalent of Facebook. That is what she is on every day and she is really not keeping up with her English language Facebook. So she said, "Mom, you need to get a German Facebook page."

I found the website and of course I can't read anything there. But I discovered that if I copy the text and paste it into an on line translator I can see what it says in English. So I copied and pasted and I read: "When does who have birthday? Who knows who over whom? Who attends my parallel school?" Slowly I figured out how to make my own Facebook page in German. Then I began to look at Anna's page. Her wall postings are

public— everybody can read what is on a page there – so I take the German and I paste over to English and I translate and it says: “After vacation do I let my nose sharp.” It doesn’t quite translate exactly so I am wondering what maybe that means. And then it says: “We see ourselves in school perhaps with the piercing.” My worst nightmare! My child has had her nose pierced in Germany! It turns out not to be true. Yet. That was her friend talking about her own possible or real nose piercing.

The computer allows us to be connected to each other across the globe because we don’t want to live in isolation. We want to be connected to each other so we find ways to do that.

In the days of the New Testament leprosy was an isolating disease. People who had leprosy were set apart and isolated from their family and friends and sent to live with other people who had leprosy. They were living in communities with other people who had this illness. They were only allowed to approach people without leprosy from a certain safe distance. In the New Testament passage Jesus is traveling in the area between Samaria and Galilee, an isolated, rural area, where some lepers live. And ten lepers approach him at the appointed distance and they call out to him: “have mercy on us.” And Jesus says to them: “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” He sends them on a journey to meet with the priest, who is the one person who can certify that a person is healed and no longer has leprosy and is able then to go out in the community and live among everyone else.

And so the ten lepers head towards the priest and they discover along the journey that they have been healed. And one leper, the one who is a Samaritan, stops in his tracks and turns around and goes back to Jesus to thank him. And Jesus says: “Were not ten healed? Where are the other nine? Go in peace, your faith has made you well.” He says to the one person, who is a Samaritan.

Now this is a passage about healing and it may invite us to think about all of our questions about healing. Some of our questions may be: Why is it that we do not always experience physical healing for ourselves and our loved ones when we pray to God? Why is it that the scripture says your faith has made you well? Does it mean therefore that if we are not physically healed we don’t have enough faith? There are many questions that we have about healing. And they are not addressed directly in this passage. But if we explore this passage we will see that Jesus is the healer, and that in this passage the people are healed in the context of their journey. And in this passage it is the outsider, the Samaritan, who is made the example of the person who returns to Jesus with gratitude for his life and his healing. It is the case also for us that healing also comes in the context of the journey of our lives. And we know from our own experience that healing is more than physical. The healing that Jesus offers to us is more than a healing of the body, it is a healing of the whole person, a healing of the soul. And we see in this passage that we, too, are invited to live in gratitude, led by the example of the Samaritan. Healing is not always physical.

Niko Calabria is a 13 year old boy who was born with one leg. Last month he was the youngest disabled person to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania. And he made this climb in order to raise awareness of people with disabilities and to raise funds for a non-profit organization that gives wheelchairs to children in developing countries. It took five and a half days for him to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro. I heard him interviewed in NPR, National Public Radio. And he said that as he made the ascent, he came to a ridge where he could see the mountain. He said it was so amazingly breathtakingly beautiful he really could not describe it. And he said no picture really shows just how huge it is. He made this journey with his father, who is an experienced hiker. And when they were within 200 yards of the top his father became very ill with mountain sickness because of the high altitude. And he was told that he had to go back down. The guides would not let his father continue onto the ascent. And so Niko did want to continue without his father. He felt like he would be abandoning his father if he continued without him. But his father said to him: "Climb the summit for both of us." And so he did. And long this journey Niko was healed. He was healed in the sense that his awareness of the world and the needs of people beyond himself was broadened and he was able to help other people around the world see the need and raise money for disabled children who needed wheelchairs. He was healed in that he became a mature young man in realizing he could make this journey without his father, on his road to independence and achieve this goal on his own. Sometimes our healing is more than physical and comes in ways that we do not expect along the course of our journey.

Now as I've been with you these ten months I've learned a lot about you as a congregation. I've learned the ways in which you are connected with each other. A few weeks ago at the yard sale Jim Gravitt came up to Debra Bradshaw and said: "I've found the greatest gift for your husband, Barclay! I've purchased it here at the yard sale and I can't wait to give it to him!" And Debra said: "I hope it's not that University of Richmond suspender set that we put in the yard sale to get rid of it!" And of course that's exactly what it was. And that is just how well you know each other. Many of you know exactly which sports teams you appreciate the most.

But I've noticed that you are also open to meeting new people and getting to know each other in new ways and connecting in new ways. There is a new ministry within the congregation which is the prayer shawl ministry. This ministry began when Rebecca Deng received a prayer shawl from another congregation in a different state. She received this prayer shawl and also the notice that the person who made the shawl had prayed for her with every stitch. And so we have started this ministry within our own congregation. Imagine receiving such a shawl, with the knowledge that someone has prayed for you with every stitch!

We are connected with each other in many ways. And in this passage we see that our healing takes place along the course of our life's journey. And our healing takes place as we are in community, caring for one another. For our Savior has offered us the ultimate healing of redemption and healing and mercy. Friends, let us journey together and may we know God's healing on that journey, and may we journey together as God's disciples, Amen.