

Sermon Notes: October 13, 2019

Focus: Brokenness, Kintsugi, Healing and Samaritans

Lectionary Readings https://www.lectionarypage.net/YearC_RCL/Pentecost/CProp23_RCL.html

I do not tire of Naaman's story in the Book of Kings, nor of the ten lepers in the Gospel of Luke. In Kings, Naaman, a non-Jew, must wash in a *Jewish* river to clean his leperous skin. This river is in the land of "those" foreign, Jewish people. In his mind, the Hebrews were second class citizens, and the Jordan River could not compare to his own beautiful rivers. Out of desperation, he cleaned in it anyway. The story has power precisely because it was so offensive to him. Once he was clean, he saw his enemies in a whole new light.

In biblical stories of healing, ***the message is not primarily about getting rid of some unfortunate disease. It's a one-two punch. First the story highlights the unlikeliness of the one who is healed. Second, it describes the surprising new direction thing they do after.***

The Gospel is similar to Naaman's story. In Luke, all the lepers must show themselves to the priest to be healed. Only the *Samaritan* leper really understands the unlikeliness of the healing and decides to do something different. He turns back to give thanks to Jesus. He didn't have to. Everybody got healed, but it was only a Samaritan who took it to the next level.

This thankful leper, apart from his disease, was a foreigner in his own land - a despised Samaritan. In Jesus' time, Samaritans were held in contempt as mutts and traitors to Judaism and Jewish national identity. There is a long backstory of how Samaritans came to be that way. You can check it out here, should you want to: https://www.bible-history.com/Samaritans/SAMARITANSBrief_History.htm

Healing and doorway to gratitude

In Biblical stories, healing is often specifically for the foreigner. It seems that the foreigner is more equipped to be thankful. This is maybe because she knows what it is like to be rejected and can appreciate more deeply the healing.

Today When people tell me about healing, they want to be healed of cancer, a safe surgery, or stop experiencing X ailment. They want family members to go back to a better past, before things broke down. It is very reasonable to expect life to return to "normal" because of healing... but these expectations aren't reflected in most biblical stories of healing.

Brokenness is Good?

Healing is not about returning to normal. Healing seems to be about knitting together something new and more vital than going back to *merely* normal. **Kintsugi** is a particular art of fixing broken pottery. Instead of trying to make a vase all fit back together precisely, the artist highlights the broken spots by welding them together with a gold slurry. The breaks, now strong, are the most beautiful part of the bowl. I will let the image speak for itself.



The very worst parts of us might be the very thing that can become the strongest. This is true through healing. What can you let God heal to become new and golden?

Modern Samaria - we 'other' or exclude people all the time, just like Jews did to Samaritans. So this page is a reflection on that idea.

Sarah Silverman is a raunchy comedian who tries to experience life through people she considers Samaritans - The red middle of the country - derogatorily known as the fly-over states. She is a staunch liberal, but has made a whole series called, "I love you America." Throughout the series, she puts herself in situations where she has to meet people she vehemently disagrees with. For her, it's Trump supporters.



The point of the series is that she literally goes to conservative homes and places and breaks bread with people who don't share her values. I love season one episode seven, "Family Dinner: Wyoming." She listens, learns and is able to communicate her values. She can only do this through deeply listening to the people she's with. She doesn't swallow her opinions, but lets them come out naturally while talking about things as disparate as fracking and Mormonism in Wyoming.

In the spirit of Sarah Silverman, can you hear the story of the good Samaritan differently? I know I'm jumping from ten lepers in chap 17 to Luke chap 10, but keeping up the theme of Samaritans and healing for different directions; jump with me.

Try this fun party trick: everytime you read a story about a "Samaritan" in the New Testament, substitute that word with a group you hate or dislike intensely. I imagine for some of you it's Trump supporters. Let me be clear, I know a MAGA supporter is not the same thing as conservative, but please allow me some slack so I don't constantly have to re-explain that.

Here's an example —Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10

*A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ **A progressive priest** happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a **Bay Area Liberal**, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a **Conservative**, (Samaritan in the text) as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ **This MAGA supporter** (Samaritan in the text) went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii^[c] and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' ³⁶ "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" ³⁷ The expert in the law replied, "**The conservative** who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."*

I am praying for an openness that leads all of us to see community more broadly, people more graciously, and healing more completely. I am trying to give thanks to God every single day. I have been healed, and am being healed. We all have a responsibility to help fill in the cracks of our broken lives with God's gold.

Todd