

Sermon for Celebrate! Sept. 18, 2019

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I believe that the cry "Help!" is an elemental statement of faith. The cry "Help!" is an expression of deep faith. At least two things are going on in a cry for help. The first is the admission, a confession that we are in over our head, that things have gone beyond our control, that circumstances and situations are overwhelming us, that we can't do it by ourselves. That kind of confession is hard. It's the reason that lots of us, though we love to give help, are reluctant to receive it. Because it's hard to make that confession that we can't do it. But after that confession is a statement of hopeful faith. Right?

Who do you ask for help? When we asked for help, it's from people that we have an expectation they have the ability and the willingness to help. So maybe it's a professor, or some other kind of mentor, but you always ask for help from someone who's got help to offer. Even if you're screaming from the waves at the people on the beach, there's a hope and an expectation that someone somewhere out there has what it takes to come to your rescue.

So (in our scripture reading - [Luke 17:11-19](#)) ten men, plagued by a debilitating, society-destroying, life-threatening disease come after Jesus crying for help, "Lord, Master Jesus, have mercy on us." How did they know that he could? We know by this point in the Gospel of Luke that Jesus can't go anywhere without drawing attention. And his reputation precedes him on his way down to Jerusalem, crowd after crowd after crowd, and so another 10, what's another 10? They cry in faith, "Master Jesus have mercy, help." And Jesus says to them, "Go on ahead to Jerusalem, show yourself to the priests," then there's two things going on in that command. One is, if they truly are healed, it's going to take the word of a priest after an examination to allow them to re-associate with the community because they are believed to be contagious.

The other thing that is at play is that the priests are at the temple and the temple is the place where God has promised to make his name dwell, and it's there that they will have the opportunity and the responsibility of offering a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving -- and thanks is a statement of faith. It's an acknowledgement that we need things from places we can't supply them. It's an acknowledgement of indebtedness, and giftedness.

And so Thanksgiving is a posture of the faithful. Not every situation calls out our thanks but in every situation there is something for which we can be thankful because thankfulness leads to joyfulness and joyfulness is a discipline of the faithful.

One of the guys in the story realizes that he's healed. They all get it. The Bible doesn't say, Luke doesn't tell us that the other nine are not healed. Luke doesn't tell us that they somehow don't get in on the deal. But one of them sees what's going on and recognizes a very fundamental reality. The reality that I think this story is actually about -- I don't think this story is about being thankful. I think the story is about knowing where God is.

The man sees the healing having happened, is moved to thankfulness, because he has asked for help and has received it and he turns around to the source of his health and comes down and doesn't shake

Jesus hand and say, "Hey, thanks for that." Luke tells us he falls at Jesus' feet in worship, and Jesus interprets his posture, he says, "Is no one else here, come back to praise God?" The man knows that while God's name may have been promised to dwell at the temple, God's presence is here in this man who has healed me and saved my life. Wow. "Wow" is an expression of awe and worship and wonder and as a posture of the faithful that the one who is the power of creation by whom that moon is hanging in the sky, would come and break into history and offer himself his own life for the sake of your life and gather you in this community of love and service to feast at his table in anticipation of your own resurrection. Wow.

So "Help." "Thanks." "Wow." In the name of Jesus, amen.