

Sermon Notes: October 9, 2022

Focus: Thankful Samaritans, Naaman's Healing, and Kintsugi

[Lectionary Readings](#)

I love Naaman's story in the Book of Kings as well as Jesus' encounter with the ten lepers in Luke. In Kings, Naaman, a non-Jew, must wash in a Jewish river to clean his leprous 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 and was healed. 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 highlight on the unlikeliness of the one who is healed and then describes their admirable surprising thing they do after (apart from a few gospel stories of the ungrateful who are healed despite themselves).

In Luke, Jesus tells all the lepers to show themselves to the priest to be healed. Only the Samaritan leper really understands the unlikeliness of his 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.

The Samaritan leper is powerless and an outsider too. It is implied that the other nine lepers were not Samaritan. Maybe they were Jewish and/or Roman, we don't know. Once they are healed, the nine believe they can return to a higher social standing, and they can shake off their old broken life and return to the glory days. Once cleansed, despite his double-hit: the Samaritan and leper chooses the magic of his gratitude.

It is helpful to keep reminding ourselves that Samaritans were held in contempt as mutts and traitors to Judaism and Jewish national identity. You can check out the long backstory: 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. Maybe this is because she knows what it is like to be rejected and can appreciate more deeply the healing. Today we want to be healed of cancer, a safe surgery, or stop experiencing X ailment. *We want to return to our past instead embracing the new normal of healing.* We 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. Healing is not a return to normal but a bend in the road that changes our forward direction.

Fixed cracks are better (Kintsugi) Healing is about making something new. Kintsugi is a particular art form for broken pottery. Instead of trying to make a broken vase 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. The very worst parts of us might be the very thing that can become the strongest, once truly healed. What can you let God heal to become stronger and golden?

I am praying for openness. May we love people more graciously and celebrate healing more completely. We all have the privilege to help fill in the cracks of broken lives with God's healing gold. **Todd**