

Wellspring Thanks

[Luke 17:11-19](#)

Living God, let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Since I was very little, I have been an Atlanta Braves Baseball fan. Now, this isn't the proudest weeks to share that, but here I am... But I'll admit, that my fandom has waned in the years since I was actually playing baseball myself. Lately, I haven't watched much, haven't cheered much, and haven't really acted like I'm a fan. So after Atlanta made their all too customary early exit from the MLB Playoffs this week, even as a "fan", my week continued on pretty uneventfully. I claim fandom, but don't really live it... The same can't be said about Football!

I talk about football, I go and watch football, I watch highlights, read analysis, and give Pastor Lauren a hard time in Staff Meeting about her Steelers! I make a big deal about my Patriots winning on Thursday, and my Dukes winning yesterday! And I'm sure there are those who will roll their eyes at my football loyalties, because you may have some of your own, but I'm willing to make my stand! I'm a fan! I cheer! I bleed purple and gold on Saturdays in the fall. Unlike my half-hearted interest in Postseason Baseball, those around me know I'm a fan of football. In short, to be "a fan" is to live it, and to live it is to root with passion!

Now, it may seem like a strange connection, but Jesus is teaching us a similar lesson today about the nature of faith. We hear a story today about ten lepers who approach Jesus, crying out to be healed. He sends them away to present themselves to the priests as ritually clean, and they go. Now on the way, one of the lepers—a Samaritan—recognizes that he's already been healed! And while the others carry on toward the priest, he returns to give thanks to Jesus. He returns to the source of his life and healing to offer his thanks and praise. Jesus responds to his thanksgiving, saying, "Get up and go, your faith has made you well."

Now, this last line can lend itself to problematic interpretation. Many have read this line to believe that in our lives, faith is something like money. If we stockpile enough of it, we can cash it in to get what we want. We've got to be really faithful if we want to cash in on that big ticket health, or happiness, or healing prayer! Better go to church this week! But this interpretation falls flat in light of the lepers being healed along the way. Each of them was healed, but only one received true wholeness. All may have been healed of their leprosy, but only one returned and received life everlasting. Only the samaritan chose to return, to give thanks, and to live out his faith. It's in the Samaritan's faithful witness that Jesus reveals to us the nature of faith. Faith is the means of our salvation here and now, if we are willing to live into it with a grateful heart. ***In short, to "have faith" is to live it, and to live it is to give thanks.***

Faith is not like currency, it is something that is lived and dared and shared and proclaimed every day. Faith is never meant to be passive, taken for granted and overlooked like my fandom of the Atlanta Braves. It's meant to be lived. And faith is lived out in Thanksgiving. We are being called to live lives of

great joy, giving thanks to God for all God has done for us. This is not some artificial putting on a smile through the pain, but a joy rooted in defiant hope that God is faithful. This is a life of faith.

And Faith is Something we already have. It is a gift, not something we can make or accomplish or store up! Faith is bestowed on us by our God. God has been faithful to us, and is relentlessly, and persistently, faithful to us. Even when we stumble and stray, God is always pursuing us in grace. Through the love of Jesus Christ, God is continuously revealing God's faithfulness to us. God is saving us, naming us, and claiming us each and every day. God's faithfulness to us comes even when we are unfaithful.

It is not currency, or goods affected by supply and demand. God's love and faithfulness for us is abundance, it is endless, it is a **wellspring** of life that renews the whole creation. In our gospel lesson today, ten lepers are healed, but only one is made truly well. Each week we gather around the font, confess our sins, crying out "Jesus, master, have mercy on us", and hear that God is faithful to us providing healing and new life. But the question of today's gospel remains... Are we responding to this gift in Thanksgiving? Are we offering our whole lives in thanks and praise? Are we living grateful lives outside of this hour on Sunday morning? Is our faith a living and daring thing the six other days of the week?

At Muhlenberg Lutheran Church, *We Strive to be a Wellspring of God's Grace:*

Open+Authentic+Relational+Serving. This story that we read today is the heart of our mission. If we want to be a wellspring of grace for our community, a source of life and hope for our neighbors in need, then we are called to not only be healed by the love of Christ but to return in Thanksgiving to the source of this abundant life. Being a wellspring church means coming back to the source of life, hope, love, and faith, and renewing in these promises that we might live abundantly.... that we might live *gratefully*. The wellspring of our shared life is Jesus Christ.

We do not come here today that we might stockpile the goodness of God. We come that we might embrace what we have already received, and share this gift gratefully to a world in need. Martin Luther once said, "God does not need your good works, but your neighbor does." With hearts and minds filled with God's promises today we are being sent out to share what we have received with the world crying out in need. Hearts and minds that are grateful to God will see God's image in the face of everyone we meet. It's no small thing that the faithful one in our story today is a Samaritan, an outsider, one look down upon by Jesus is faithful followers. The wellspring of God's love knows no insider our outsider. You are beloved as you are, you have been healed, you are being offered salvation here and now. These are the promises around which we build our lives.

So church, let us gather around the wellspring of Grace again. Through whatever highs or lows we bring with us today, let us recall a God who is faithful, even when we are faithless. Let us remember a God who has already healed us, and let us return to God with grateful hearts—living, daring, and sharing this thing called faith. And then dear church, "get up and go on your way, your faith has made you well." Amen.