

# *Gratitude Foundation*

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***“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?  
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”***

(Lk. 17:15-17)

## **The Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

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***“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”***

(1 Thess: 5:18)

# Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Reading I

### 2 Kings 5:14-17

Naaman went down and plunged into the Jordan seven times at the word of Elisha, the man of God.  
His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean of his leprosy.

Naaman returned with his whole retinue to the man of God. On his arrival he stood before Elisha and said,  
"Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel.  
Please accept a gift from your servant."

Elisha replied, "As the LORD lives whom I serve, I will not take it;" and despite Naaman's urging, he still refused.  
Naaman said: "If you will not accept, please let me, your servant, have two mule-loads of earth, for I will no longer offer holocaust or sacrifice to any other god except to the LORD."

## Responsorial Psalm

### Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4

R. (cf. 2b) **The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.**  
Sing to the LORD a new song,  
for he has done wondrous deeds;  
his right hand has won victory for him,  
his holy arm.  
R. **The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.**

The LORD has made his salvation known:  
in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice.  
He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness  
toward the house of Israel.  
R. **The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.**

All the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation by our God.  
Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands:  
break into song; sing praise.  
**R. The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.**

## **Reading II**

### **2 Timothy 2:8-13**

Beloved:  
Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David:  
such is my gospel, for which I am suffering,  
even to the point of chains, like a criminal.  
But the word of God is not chained.  
Therefore, I bear with everything for the sake of those who are chosen,  
so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus,  
together with eternal glory.  
This saying is trustworthy:  
If we have died with him  
we shall also live with him;  
if we persevere  
we shall also reign with him.  
But if we deny him  
he will deny us.  
If we are unfaithful  
he remains faithful,  
for he cannot deny himself.

## **Alleluia**

### **1 Thessalonians 5:18**

R. Alleluia, alleluia.  
In all circumstances, give thanks,  
for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.  
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

## **Gospel**

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

As Jesus continued his journey to Jerusalem,  
he traveled through Samaria and Galilee.  
As he was entering a village, ten lepers met him.  
They stood at a distance from him and raised their voices, saying,  
"Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!"  
And when he saw them, he said,  
"Go show yourselves to the priests."  
As they were going they were cleansed.  
And one of them, realizing he had been healed,  
returned, glorifying God in a loud voice;  
and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him.  
He was a Samaritan.  
Jesus said in reply,  
"Ten were cleansed, were they not?  
Where are the other nine?  
Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?"  
Then he said to him, "Stand up and go;  
your faith has saved you."

# Exegesis

## 2 Kings 5:14-17

Scholars seem to agree that the final redaction of the *First and Second Book of Kings* was completed near the end of the Babylonian Exile. 2 Kings 25:27 reveals the release of King Jehoiachin from prison in the year 560 B.C. 1 and 2 Kings chronicle the events of the Israelites from the occupation of the Promised Land under Joshua to the time of the Babylonian Exile. The lifespan of the Prophet Elisha is estimated as 910 – 800 B.C. Scholars suggest that it was probably King Jehoram (852-841) who was the King of Israel, the Northern Kingdom at the time of the healing of Naaman. The king of Syria at that time was Benhadad II.

Although Syria and Israel were considered enemies, they were experiencing a period of peace at the time of the events of our pericope. Historians note that there were ongoing skirmishes among bordering frontier tribes at the time. The little Israelite girl who was the slave and servant of Naaman's wife is an example of the ongoing division between the nations.

It is apparent that Naaman already had a relationship with Yahweh. "Naaman, the army commander of the king of Aram, was highly esteemed and respected by his master, for through him the Lord (Yahweh) had brought victory to Aram. But valiant as he was, the man was a leper." (2 Kgs 5: 1).

It was the little Israelite girl, the servant of Naaman's wife, who initiated the events of Naaman's healing. "'If only my master would present himself to the prophet in Samaria,' she said to her mistress, 'he would cure him of his leprosy.'" (2 Kgs 5: 3). In response Naaman went to his master, the king of Aram and received permission, a letter of request to the Israelite king, and the customary gifts, presumably for the king. "So Naaman set out, taking along ten silver talents, six thousand gold pieces, and ten festal garments." (2 Kgs 5: 5).

Upon arrival at the door of Elisha, the prophet sent a messenger out to instruct Naaman to go, and wash in the Jordan River seven times, and the messenger told him that he would be cured. This was not what Naaman was expecting. "But Naaman went away angry, saying, 'I thought that he would surely come out and stand there to invoke the Lord (Yahweh) his God, and would move his hand over the spot, and thus cure the leprosy. Are not the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be cleansed?' With this, he turned about in anger and left" (2 Kgs 5: 11-12). The Jordan River is turbulent and murky while the great rivers of Syria, the Abana and the Pharpar run crystal clear. The Syrian rivers would seem to be the place to wash for cleansing. Nevertheless, Naaman, at the urging of his servants, obeys the request of Elisha's messenger and he is healed.

*"Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel. Please accept a gift from your servant."* With his miraculous healing Naaman is moved from faith to knowledge in the power of the God of Israel. The Hebrew word that is translated as *know* in this passage is *yadah*. *Yadah* connotes a deepening of understanding, perception and knowledge based on a lived experience. The power of God to heal is now apparent to Naaman. The One and only true God is made manifest to him in the experience. The Hebrew word translated as *God* in this verse is *Elohim*.

*Elisha replied, "As the LORD lives whom I serve, I will not take it;"* The Hebrew word translated as *LORD* here is *Yahweh*.

*Naaman said: "If you will not accept, please let me, your servant, have two mule-loads of earth, for I will no longer offer holocaust or sacrifice to any other god except to the LORD."* The Hebrew word translated as *Lord* in this verse is again *Yahweh*. Naaman moves from acknowledging *Elohim* as the One true God, to calling God by name, *Yahweh*. There was an ancient belief that gods were unique to a geographic area. In this errant mindset, Naaman desires to transport some holy ground of the Promised Land to his own land. His heart and his intent were in the right place as he vows to offer holocaust and sacrifice to the One true God on an altar built on the ground of Israel.

Jesus refers to the healing of Naaman the Syrian in our Gospel selection this weekend and also earlier in the Luke's Gospel when He announces that salvation will go out beyond the confines of the Israelite nation to all of the world. "There were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." (Lk 4: 27).



## Exegesis (Continued)

### Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4

Psalm 98 consists of nine verses. It is titled *The Coming of God* in the NAB and *Make a Joyful Noise to the Lord* in the ESV. Psalm 98 is referred to as an enthronement psalm that was used in synagogue liturgies. It is calling the people to gratitude and praise for the saving deeds of Yahweh. It includes the call for all humanity to join in joyful worship and for all creation to acknowledge Yahweh's rule.<sup>1</sup> The saving power of God is clear for all to see throughout history, and it elicits our response.

*Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done wondrous deeds; his right hand has won victory for him, his holy arm.* This verse begins by echoing Psalm 33:3. "Sing to God a new song; skillfully play with joyful chant." (Ps 33: 3). The Hebrew word translated as *Lord* in these verses is *Yahweh*. The Hebrew word that is translated as *new song* in these verses is *hadas shir*. *Hadas* means new or fresh, a new creation or composition. *Shir* suggests a joyful song of praise and worship. The second of this verse references Psalm 96 and Exodus 15. "Tell God's glory among the nations; among all peoples, God's marvelous deeds." (Ps 96: 3). "Your right hand, O Lord, magnificent in power, Your right hand, O Lord, has shattered the enemy." (Ex 15: 6).

*The LORD has made his salvation known: in the sight of the nations, he has revealed his justice.* The Hebrew word that is translated as *salvation* in this verse and throughout this psalm is *yeshua*. *Yeshua* will be later translated as *Joshua* and then *Jesus*. The word suggests an act of deliverance and victory over bondage and oppression, being set free and healed. The Hebrew word translated as *known* is *yadah*. (See exegesis above). The psalmist seems to be echoing the Prophet Isaiah near the end of the Babylonian Exile. "It is too little, He says, for you to be My servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the survivors of Israel; I will make you a light to the nations, that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." (Is 49: 6). "The Lord has bared His holy arm in the sight of all the nations; all the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God." (Is 52: 10). "Nations shall behold Your vindication, and all the kings Your glory; You shall be called by a new name pronounced by the mouth of the Lord." (Is 62: 2).

*He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness toward the house of Israel.* This psalm echoes Psalm 36 in praising Yahweh's love and fidelity. "Lord, Your love reaches to heaven. Your fidelity, to the clouds." (Ps 36: 6). The psalm speaks of God's *kindness*, also translated as *steadfast love (hesed)* and *faithfulness/fidelity (emuna)*. The steadfast love and fidelity of God is immutable. God is love, God is steadfast and faithful, God is Truth, and God cannot be untrue or unfaithful to His nature. This is Truth. Scripture often describes this Truth with the image of God as rock, e.g.: "I love you Lord, my strength, Lord, my Rock, my fortress, my deliverer, my God, my Rock of refuge." (Ps 18:2), "Be my Rock and refuge, my secure stronghold; for you are my Rock and fortress." (Ps 71:3)

*All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God. Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands: break into song; sing praise.* Again, this verse echoes one of the prior psalms. "All the ends of the earth will worship and turn to the Lord; all the families of nations will bow low before you." (Ps 22: 28). And once again the psalmist seems to be referring to the cry of the Prophet Isaiah who anticipates the end of the Babylonian Exile. "Raise a glad cry, you heavens: the Lord has done this; shout, you depths of the earth. Break forth, you mountains, into song, you forest, with all your trees. For the Lord has redeemed Jacob and shows His glory through Israel." (Is 44: 23).

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1. Brown, Fitzmyer, Murphy; The New Jerome Biblical Commentary; P.H.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J. ; page 543.

## Exegesis (Continued)

### 2 Timothy 2:8-13

*Second Timothy* is the second of three *Pastoral Letters*, which consist of *First* and *Second Timothy* and *Titus*. There is some uncertainty as to time of composition and even authorship. Some suggest authentic authorship of Paul with the assistance of a secretary to explain the difference in writing style from other letters known to be of Paul's hand. Other scholars suggest a composition of Paul's notes assembled at a later date. All of the above discussion is beyond the scope of this exegesis. It is the message from the word of God that is important.

Timothy accompanied Paul on his second and third missionary journey. We know from the content of 2 Timothy that Paul is writing from prison. He is continuing to shepherd Timothy who is now shepherding the nascent Church.

2 Timothy seems to have been penned during Paul's final imprisonment. "For I am already being poured out like a libation, and the time of my departure is at hand." (2 Tim 4: 6). Paul is referring to his death, which he feels is immanent. He also shares his desire to die for the Lord in his *Letter to the Philippians*. "For me life is Christ, and death is gain. If I go on living in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. And I do not know which I shall choose. I am caught between the two. I long to depart this life and be with Christ, for that is far better. Yet that I remain in the flesh is more necessary for your benefit." (Phil 1: 21-24). Paul was condemned during the persecution of Nero. He was beheaded outside of Rome along the Ostian Way.

Our pericope taken from the Second Chapter of 2 *Timothy* is part of a larger section beginning with verse one of chapter two that is titled in the NAB *Timothy's Conduct* and in the ESV *A Good Soldier of Christ Jesus*. The chapter begins as follows: "So you, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well. Bear your share of hardship along with me like a good soldier of Christ Jesus." (2 Tim 1-3).

*Beloved: Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David: such is my gospel, for which I am suffering, even to the point of chains, like a criminal.* Paul clearly states this gospel in *1 Corinthians*. "But now Christ has been risen from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead came also through a human being." (1 Cor 15: 20-21).

*But the word of God is not chained. Therefore, I bear with everything for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, together with eternal glory.* St. Paul describes the unleash of the gospel in *Philippians*. "I want you to know, brothers, that my situation has turned out rather to advance the gospel, so that my imprisonment has become well known in Christ throughout the whole praetorium and to all the rest, and so that the majority of the brothers, having taken encouragement in the Lord from my imprisonment, dare more than ever to proclaim the word fearlessly." (1 Phil 1: 12-14).

*This saying is trustworthy: If we have died with him, we shall also live with him; if we persevere, we shall also reign with him. But if we deny him, he will deny us. If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.* Many scholars believe that in this passage St. Paul is reciting an early Christian hymn. On one level this expression of dying and rising with Christ refers to Christian Baptism. "Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were indeed buried with Him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life." (Rom 6: 1-4). On an even deeper level, St. Paul talked about the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the human soul. It is in that union with divine life that we die and rise with Christ. If we die united to Him, we shall live with Him for He is risen. To remain faithful to Him is to remain connected to Him in state of grace, living in right relationship with Him. The only way to break that bond of our baptism is to deny Him in a state of sin. Through it all, God remains faithful for He cannot deny His nature.

## Exegesis (Continued)

### Luke 17:11-19

*As Jesus continued his journey to Jerusalem, he traveled through Samaria and Galilee.* The setting of our Gospel pericope is the same as it has been for several weeks, Jesus is journeying to Jerusalem with His disciples to embrace His Passion and Death. It was a common practice for devout Jews to avoid Gentile territory; Jesus enters places like Samaria and other Gentile communities. Similar to our first reading this weekend where the Lord cures the Gentile Naaman, the message is clear that Jesus came to save all people. This story of the curing of the ten lepers is unique to Luke's Gospel. It certainly follows the motif that Luke, the physician highlights, healing and salvation for all who seek it, Jew and Gentile alike. As the lepers were outcasts, it also follows his theme of lost and found.

*As he was entering a village, ten lepers met him. They stood at a distance from him and raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!"* People with leprosy were excluded from the Temple and outcasts from society due to the contagious nature of their disease. Those who shared this horrible disease tended to move about together in order to survive. The ostracization was part of the Law. "The one who bears the sore of leprosy shall keep garments rent and his head bare and shall muffle his beard; he shall cry out, 'Unclean, unclean!' As long as the sore is on him, he shall declare himself unclean, since he is in fact unclean. He shall dwell apart, making his abode outside the camp." (Lev 13: 45-46). "The Lord said to Moses: 'Order the Israelites to expel from camp every leper...'" (Num 5: 1). It is interesting that in violation of the Law the lepers did not cry out "Unclean, unclean!" Instead, they cried out "Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!" The Greek word translated as *Master* in this verse is *Epistates*. *Epistates* means *master, lord, or overseer*. At its root it means *one who stands nearby*. Instead of keeping His distance Jesus stands near. This is the only time in Luke's Gospel that someone other than a disciple calls Jesus *Epistates*. The Greek word for *pity* in this verse is *eleeo*. *Eleeo* means *have compassion, to have or show mercy toward*. The word has even evolved to mean *to have mercy on by the mercy of God*, i.e., it has come to mean a mercy that is divine in nature.

*And when he saw them, he said, "Go show yourselves to the priests."* This too was a requirement of Levitical Law. "The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'If someone has on his skin a scab or pustule of blotch which appears to be the sore of leprosy, he shall be brought to Aaron, the priest, or to one of the priests among his descendants who will examine the sore on his skin.'" (Lev 13: 1-3a).

*As they were going, they were cleansed. And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned, glorifying God in a loud voice; and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him.* *He was a Samaritan.* The underlying Greek word translated as *cleansed* is *katharizo* which means *to make clean, purify, to heal and make ritually pure before God*. The subsequent word used in response by the Samaritan and translated in this verse as *healed* is *iaomai*. *Iaomai* means *to make well, heal or cure*. It has more of a sense of physical healing in contrast with spiritual or ritual healing. It makes sense that the Gentile Samaritan would respond more on a physical level. One of them, the foreigner, realizing that he had been healed, returned. Didn't the others realize that they were healed? How could such an external and obvious healing go unnoticed? The point is that, for whatever reason, they neglected to give thanks and glorify God for the gift of healing. The response of falling at the feet of Jesus and glorifying God is a common occurrence in Luke-Acts to the experience of healing and miracles. (See Lk 5:25-26; 7:16; 13:13; 18:43; Acts 4:21; 11:18; and 13:48). What is unique in this response is *giving thanks (eucharistein)*.

*Jesus said in reply, "Ten were cleansed, were they not? Where are the other nine? Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?" Then he said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you."* The question of Jesus is clear, where is the gratitude? In the prior verse the Greek word that is translated as *thanked* is *eucharistein*. The word that is translated *give thanks* in this verse is *doxa* which means *to give honor and glory and praise*. This is a response of gratitude and is so translated as *thanks* in this version. It is translated as *praise* in the ESV. The Greek word that is translated as *faith* in this verse is *pistis*. *Pistis* is a word that has evolved through the NT to mean a deep indwelling and abiding presence in the human soul. (See exegesis on 2 Tim 1 – 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT, Year C). The Greek word that is translated as *saved* in this verse is *sozo*. *Sozo* means *to save or deliver, to be healed or made well*.

This event highlights the connection between salvation and healing, between faith and salvation, and between physical and spiritual healing. The fact that the lepers were outcast is symbolic of human alienation from God and from each other by the scourge of sin. Jesus is journeying to Jerusalem to heal that brokenness caused by sin. His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension healed that separation once for all. For that we should all be grateful! Amen!

Were not ten (all) cured? Where are the other nine?



## Reflection

St. Augustine once said, “Faith begins with humility the foundational virtue of the spiritual life.” St. John of the Cross once said, “Faith begins with gratitude.” Both of these men are saints and of course both are correct. Both of these foundational virtues of the spiritual life come to light in this weekends’ Word of God.

Humility and gratitude go hand in hand. It would seem to me that humility precedes gratitude. Coming to grips with our human weakness, our need for healing would lead us to seek healing. In our first reading from the *Second Book of Kings*, it would have taken an awful lot of humility for Naaman to first of all listen to a Hebrew slave and then to bring himself to come to an Israelite Prophet to seek healing. Naaman was an enemy military leader! It would seem that it would have taken a lot of trust and courage for Naaman to come into enemy territory as well. Naaman humbles himself and comes and he is healed. His response is one of gratitude and faith.

In our gospel this weekend Jesus himself is traveling through enemy territory on His way to Jerusalem to accomplish His mission of dying for our sins. Ten people inflicted with the scourge of leprosy approached Jesus. Leprosy was perhaps the curse of the ancient world. It was a long and drawn out death sentence. Those inflicted with this disease were condemned to a life of isolation because it was so contagious and so dreaded. I can only imagine the feelings of these men who were cured of this terrible disease. Think of the pain of alienation that they must have experienced being cut off from family and community. Jesus sent them to the priests to be cleared for re-entry into society. One would have to wonder how they lived the rest of their lives given this second chance. Naaman, our patient in the first reading, we are told was cleansed and his skin became white as a new born child. Perhaps the shin of a child symbolizes his rebirth to new life.

One of the ten, who were healed, filled with gratitude, came back to Jesus to give thanks to God. Jesus asks the question, “Where are the other nine?” Where is the gratitude? We are told, “As they were going they were cleansed. And one of them, realizing he had been cleansed returned...” Did the others not realize that they were cleansed? How could someone, with this very visible and painful disease, not realize that he was healed? With this slowly progressing disease maybe they became so accustomed to the life that it became in modern day jargon, “the new norm.” Maybe we too, immersed in the culture that we live in have lost our sense of sin and alienation. First of all, we must realize our need for healing before we can realize that we are cleansed. Only then will we experience the attitude of gratitude and return to give glory and thanks to God.

Yours in Christ,



## Personal Witness

Gratitude is a state of being that I experienced throughout most of my life. As a child I was raised in a “sea” of gratitude. My parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles and extended family seemed always grateful for the basic gifts of life. We were not rich in material possessions, but rich in love, family, faith and community. My grandparents on both sides of the family came from very modest beginnings. I recall my grandmother speaking of her childhood days on the farm. She said, “We were poor back then but didn’t know it.” I feel that I can say the same thing about my childhood experience.

As I went off to college and entered the working world, I seemed to have lost the gift of gratitude somewhere along the way. It was not until the middle of my seminary experience that I rediscovered the gift. I always thought of gratitude as a response to the many gifts that God has blessed us with. Now I understand gratitude as both a gift and a response.

It was the beginning of my third year of seminary. The program at Mundelein required that our class begin the year with a seven-day silent retreat. All of us were just coming from our pastoral quarter where we were each immersed in a parish community. I felt that I was ready for full time ministry and was not looking forward to two more years of classwork and papers. I had a bad attitude and did not want to be there. Luckily my friends and I got together the day before and caught up on things. As it turned out none of us were looking forward to the silent retreat.

The first couple of days were very uncomfortable, and they dragged on forever. Each night most of us individually walked around the lake, which was a 3.5-mile trail through a heavily wooded area with lots of wildlife. Many of us did that walk almost every day of our seminary stay, typically in small groups with heavy conversation. There was something different on the third night of that silent retreat. The noise seemed almost deafening; the chatter of squirrels and chipmunks, the high-pitched squeak of crickets, and the croaking of frogs was at a decibel that I did not know was possible. I listened intently as I walked alone in the darkness and then I just stopped and listened for the longest time. At first, I wondered why nature was suddenly so loud. Then I realized that it was always like that. I had walked that same path hundreds of times over the past three years and this was the first time that I had heard the sound of God’s creation.

That walk proved to be a metaphor for what I experienced next. I heard God speak to my heart in the following days in ways that I had never experienced before. God was like a constant tiny whisper in the silence of my heart. It was a life-changing experience. My negative feelings about being there vanished and I was in turn overwhelmed with gratitude. I knew that I was where God wanted me to be at that moment in time. I was blessed to be in one of the world’s top seminaries, studying with some of the top scripture scholars and theologians in the world, studying the works of the greatest thinkers of all time. I knew that God had chosen me, that I was a part of His plan. Thirty years later those feelings of gratitude remain as strong as they were then. And all that I had to do was open my heart, let God’s grace in, and listen! To be filled with God is to be filled with gratitude!

