**21 Pentecost, Oct. 13, 2013, Jer 29:1,4-7;Ps 66, 2 Tim 2:8-15;Luke 17: 11-19; Rev. Mary S. Trainor**

***"Be joyful in God....sing the glory of his name....say to God "How awesome are your deeds!...Come now and see the works of God, how wonderful he is!***  Psalm 66: 1,2,4

These words from our Psalm for today eloquently capture our feelings about the amazing and awesome things in the world around us! In my life, my new grandson, Liam, is most amazing to me right now. I have just come back from Colorado where I had the privilege of holding him when he was just a few hours old, and then helped care for him during the past several weeks. Holding his 8 lb body, listening to him coo, changing his tiny diapers, watching his glowing mother feed him and his proud daddy care for him all were such sources of joy! This was an extra special life event, but even everyday events are sources of joy: the Fall colors, each other, Shawano barn quilts, good harvest, family, friends, this church. When each of us takes the time to reflect, we are able to notice special moments and things in our lives. And, when we examine at our lives in the USA compared to other places in the world, like Syrian and Rwanda, we see how fortunate we are to have basic things like clean water, hot showers, hospitals nearby, grocery stores stocked with food. Yet it is so easy to go through our lives, caught up being busy, and **not** thinking about God's blessings upon us, not remembering that we owe it all to God.

Example: A scene this past week in a small crowded coffee shop in Denver: many people in line, few places to sit: four small tables, all occupied, and a huge table where eight people could sit. Problem was, there were only two people at the table for eight. These two people had paperwork spread out over the entire table, had finished their coffee and were intensely talking and pointing to their computer screens, oblivious of the folks around them standing awkwardly with their coffee looking for a place to sit. Jim and I finally got to sit at a small table, but I just couldn’t rest until I said something to them – to help them become aware of the needs of others around them, and the abundance of space at their table. Their response to my inquiry was as follows, “**Well, if someone wants to sit here they will say something to us. And, if they do, THEN we will move over.”** This was just an ordinary scene in America on any given day – but it was remarkable to me because these two people were so unaware, insensitive, and ungrateful! Their behavior was focused all on themselves. This scene made me think about the times when I have not been mindful of the needs of others, unaware of my blessings. This brings us to today's Gospel lesson, where we heard about nine people who did not get the enormous significance of their blessings. Oh, their situation was very different than the two people in the Denver coffee shop - but there were similarities, and this story has a message for us all.

The Gospel is set at the entrance to a little village, on Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Ten people, who knew about Jesus' reputation as a healer, watched Him approach and together tried to get His attention-- and oh my, did they need healing! In our day, we dread the "C" word: cancer; in those days, people dreaded the "L" word: leprosy. It was a terrible, disfiguring, contagious disease that was incurable back then -- now it is curable with antibiotics. People who were lepers had awful sores all over their bodies, and their noses and fingers actually fell off. Lepers, like these ten, were outcasts, isolated from family, church, friends, any social contact. They shouted desperately, “***Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"*** Jesus responded. We are told, "***As they went, they were made clean***." They were healed! Can you imagine the scene: the ten kept walking and as they walked their sores disappeared, their lost fingers were restored, their bodies returned to normal. They must have been truly amazed to see this miracle happen to them - and so full of joy! They must have been so excited to begin their lives again as regular people, but first they were required to go to the priest to verify their healing. Swept up in racing there, nine of them kept on going -- they did not go back to Jesus in gratitude. This behavior sounds familiar to us --we get it! We humans cry out to God in crisis, when we are desperate, but -- when things are going great, well there just is not time for God; God is quickly forgotten and we move on with our lives. It's ironic too, for when the nine lepers were in need of God, they were actually very near God (Jesus) -- but when they became well they moved away from God.

One of the lepers, however, "***when he saw that he was healed, he turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus feet and thanked him***." What is really interesting here is that this one guy who came back, praising and thanking Jesus, was actually a Samaritan, an outcast by nature of his race and culture. This guy had double jeopardy: an outcast because of his disease and an outcast because of his race. He understood his dependence upon God for all his blessings, and showed his gratitude! This man, whose life had been transformed by God's grace, demonstrated his faith in God when he knelt at Jesus' feet. The Gospel ends with Jesus saying to him, "***Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."***

Fortunately, none of us have leprosy, and yet this message relates to us all for Jesus uses leprosy as a metaphor for our lives separated from God and the healing and gratitude as lives transformed by God. When we are living our lives turned towards ourselves and away from God, then we too have a disease -- the disease is called sin. Sin is defined as separation from God. God's greatest desire is to have a close relationship with you, for you are the greatest object of His love. God is in the healing business, He specializes in taking self-centered, fearful and flawed people like us – and heals us, changes us – makes us into something new, helps us turn away from sin. We are offered God's transforming love through Jesus Christ our Savior. ***Faith*** is the act of accepting that perfect love, and thanksgiving naturally follows.

In a few minutes, we have a chance to partake in the "Great Thanksgiving," the "Holy Eucharist;" the word "*eucharisto*" means "thanks." You, like the lepers, have a choice. God gives you the ability to make the choice. Will you, like the nine lepers who kept on going, chose to take God and all that He has given you, for granted? Or -- will you choose to receive God's love and healing power, and live a transformed life, a life full of gratitude. Come to Jesus, experience new life and acquire a grateful heart; be healed, be strengthened.

 As you come forward to receive Holy Communion today, see yourself like the one leper at the feet of Jesus overcome by thankfulness. **A Church that is full of thanksgiving is a church that is full of people who have met Jesus Christ.  *"Be joyful in God....sing the glory of his name....say to God "How awesome are your deeds!...Come now and see the works of God, how wonderful he is!***  Psalm 66: 1,2,4 **Amen.**