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NEWS & EVENTS – DECEMBER 2021

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11 While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; 13 and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 When He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they were going, they were cleansed. 15 Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, 16 and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine — where are they? 18 "Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" 19 And He said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well." (Luke 17:11-19)

Have you ever heard the voice of vitality? Voices we remember come in many forms. Maybe you were comforted as a child by a parent who had a soothing and reassuring sound in their voice. Or perhaps you were corrected immediately by a noticeable change in their tone. Some people have a violent voice that leave emotional scars, always involved in a war of words. Perhaps you had a sibling who would whine about something they wanted over and over. The monotonous droning of their voice as they repeated would wear you down and you would give them what they wanted just to stop the noise. As you study the affliction of the disease called leprosy it is revealed that one symptom is the destruction of the voice. What was once strong and clear became a raspy and croaking sound as the leper would proclaim his status for all to hear...*Unclean, unclean!* They would gather in groups, since they were ostracized and secluded in society. Leprosy appears to a type, or picture, of sin. The outward, physical manifestation was hard to observe. The leper's outward physical appearance revealed the corruption of the flesh. It's like you were looking at what the inside of a sinner's heart must look like to a Holy God. No doubt the hoarse, raspy, and croaking voices were hard to listen to as well. Lepers are what Jesus saw as he entered a village during His journey to Jerusalem. Ten leprous men stood at a distance. Jesus heard their voices. They were not pronouncing themselves unclean to the Holy One of God. They raised their voices as they begged for mercy. They were specific in their plea, not praying some generic incantation to a god they did not know. They desperately called out the name of Jesus, described Him as Master, and they cried out for mercy. They appealed to Jesus for what the greatest gift a leper could receive. Mercy from God. What a drama unfolded as the voice of Jesus gave them hope. He said to them *"Go and show yourselves to the priests."* To be reinstated the leper must first be deemed restored and recovered from his condition. The ten lepers responded admirably. They heard the command and responded immediately and obediently. I wonder what they were thinking as they were cleansed on the way. They were healed as they were obedient to the Word of God. This voice is hard to forget if you have ever heard it. As you pray for mercy, even struggling to have your prayers heard by God, we sometimes will default to the cry for mercy. The more personal and specific we may get, there is a lot of merit in the cry for mercy. We are all like the lepers, standing at a distance from God...crying for mercy.

Here is where the lesson shouts out to me today. A Samaritan leper, the lowest of the low, realized that he had been restored. *When he saw that he had been healed, turned back.* The journey he now embarks upon is worship. He not only glorifies God with a loud voice, he fell at the feet of Jesus, and gave thanks to Him. You see, we only can properly approach the Most High God when we have encountered the Voice of Jesus. We can infer that all the lepers are healed...but only one returns to give glory to God, and Jesus is responsible for his healing. Would we believe that God desires that all men come into the knowledge of the truth and trust the Lord? This one is a foreigner, one not born into the nation of Israel, not a member of one of the tribes of Jacob. This man is a stranger, who once stood at a distance from God. Now the one who lived afar from God draws near. This is the desire of the Living God...that all men come to Him and live...but we must respond to the Voice. *Come closer* we hear the Lord say. Now is the time to worship. The glory of God is exemplified in the display of our worship. Gratitude is part of that worship experience. Grateful for the mercy of God. When we believe God, faith can truly make us well. My faith is not secured in my practice of it. It is anchored in the object of that faith and the offering of His mercy. Trusting the Word of God brings healing to the soul, when we hear what He says and obey His direction. Be thankful for the Mercy of God, available to all who will cry out for it...from one thankful and hopeful leper to another...

Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam