

Good crisp Fall Sunday morning from a hill in Maine....

The leaves are definitely f-a-l-l-i-n-g.... and there is wood to be stacked, lawn furniture to be put away for the coming winter, hoses to be drained, and leaves to be raked..... the rituals of the changing seasons..... What would we do without rituals? Worship rituals, seasonal rituals, morning rituals – like coffee and a biscotti for me each morning! Without rituals our daily behaviors would be random – great for vacation mode, but not so helpful in our everyday lives. Rituals bring us steadiness, comfort, and the assurance that there are SOME things we can be in control of in a world where so much seems out of control. I invite you to think about the rituals that sustain you in good ways each week, and think, too, about the rituals that perhaps should be “rethink,” and perhaps put aside for some fresh, new rituals. Think about your rituals this week..... renew them all or reconsider some of them..... I believe you will be glad you did.....

Here’s a few quotes to go with the theme of the text from Luke today and the sermon theme:::

Cicero – *“A thankful heart is the parent of all virtues.”*

Saint Ambrose – *“No duty is more urgent than that of returning thanks.”*

Chinese proverb – *“When eating bamboo sprouts, remember the one who planted them.”*

Blessings and love to all this day.... Susan

p.s. If you would like to contribute to the clean-up and recovery efforts from Hurricanes Ian and Fiona on the Gulf coast of Florida and Cuba, you may do so by **sending a check to the United Church of Christ, PO Box 71957, Cleveland, OH 44194. Please be sure to note “Hurricanes 2022 Fund” in the memo section.** From the UCC Home Office in Cleveland, “Your generous financial support will be used by our partners in the areas of greatest need, for relief and long-term recovery.” The UCC church on Sanibel Island was destroyed in Hurricane Ian.

p.p.s. I will plan to post this morning’s sermon on my Facebook page – freerangepastor, and on the Federated Church of Thomaston Facebook page later today.

***“Were not ten made clean?”***  
**A Sermon for the Federated Church of Thomaston**

**Thomaston, Maine**  
**Sunday, October 9, 2022**  
**Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet**  
**Scripture: Luke 17:11-19**

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, **“Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”** Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”  
Luke  
17:11-19

Will you pray with me. Loving God, open our eyes that we might see all for which we have to be thankful. Open our arms that we might reach out and do for others in your name what you have done for us. Open our hearts that we might welcome into your fellowship even those with whom we don’t agree. Be among us, oh God, in this time of divisiveness and separation in our country. Bring us together as your people and teach how to say thank you for one another and for your presence among us. Amen.

It seems very appropriate that our text for today from the Gospel of Luke about the healing of ten lepers comes to us in yet another time when our country seems so divided against itself in major ways.

There are no “two ways” about it, there are *too* many ways about it that we are split in our social and political views in our country. I would say we are a country in need of some major healing. We’re limping and bickering with one another and the whole world is watching. The strongest nation in the world is in need of some new medicine to give us more than a shot in the arm. We need some new medicine to give us a shot in the heart and in the mind and in the spirit and in the body.

But... I say that to myself and then I pause... maybe it’s not *new* medicine we need, but *old* medicine. Meister Eckhart, a Dominican mystic of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, wrote, “If in your lifetime the only prayer you offer is Thanks, that would suffice.”<sup>[1]</sup>

It seems to me, we could use a little thanksgiving around here – in every home, in every town, in every state, in the halls of Congress and in the White House. It seems to me we're spending an amazing amount of time pointing fingers at one another and saying to our friends – the ones who *agree* with our point of view – how ignorant and misguided those *other* people are – the ones who don't agree with our point of view. Oh, the energy we expend on all this finger pointing and disagreeing with one another!

Wouldn't you just love to see on the nightly news that a Congressman or Congresswoman who was a Democrat was praising one of their Republican colleagues for making a very good and valid point and suggestion about our financial problems?

Wouldn't you just love to see on the nightly news that a Republican in Congress stood up on the floor of the House and said, "I want to commend my colleague, X, the Democratic Representative, from X state, for helping me to realize I've missed a few things in my recent opinions about the mess we're in?"

And wouldn't you just love it if at the end of these statements each of these representatives of ours to Washington said "Thank you" to one another?

We don't need any *new* medicine, my friends, we need some *old* medicine – the medicine we learn about in our passage from Luke for this morning. An outsider in all ways – cast out because of his disease, cast out because of his ethnicity, cast out from society – "turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him." (Lk 17:15-16)

Oh, how I would love to see some of our representatives in Washington prostrating themselves before one another and saying "thank you," instead of posturing in one another's faces with invisible clenched fists, if not visible ones. I've always found in my personal affairs that saying "thank you" goes a long, long way toward mending fences, erasing old hurts and wounds, and building ties that bind rather than bind up. Add to saying "thank you," an occasional "I'm sorry" and we would have the world's problems all patched up, at least in my opinion!

Unfortunately there seems a much greater concern these days for saving face than for saving our country, for standing up for one's own opinions no matter the cost, rather than compromising for the good of the welfare of all the people of this great land. And the two words, "thank you," seem to have disappeared from the vocabulary of too many of us.

Let's take a break from all the negativity around these days. Share with me what you're thankful for this day. (get responses)

I'm thankful for relationships with people who truly care about me as much as I care about them.

I'm thankful for living in this part of the United States where most of us take our history seriously and do not want to let it fade from our memories or the memories of our children and grandchildren.

I'm thankful for knowing people for whom history and tradition are just as vital to our future well being as are our modern conveniences, like running water and flush toilets!

I'm thankful that on Sunday mornings we can meet here, diverse as we might be in our political opinions, and come together to worship God and to give thanks for all we have been given.

I'm thankful we don't have to be concerned that when we walk out our doors after worship we don't have to worry that someone, or anyone, is going to threaten us with bodily harm for any reason.

I am saddened by the reality that too often it seems the only time people truly come together in harmony, or at least with some degree of good will, is in the midst of a local or nation crisis or tragedy – whether it be something like what happened on September 11, 2001, or dealing with the aftermath of a violent hurricane like Ian, or the loss of a local and beloved community member like Hank or Muriel or so many others.

What does it say about us that we are more prone to being at odds with one another, rather than in harmony, except for times of monumental disaster or tragedy or loss? Shouldn't we *always* be willing to show respect for one another and *be thankful* for the opportunity to get to know those whom we think are so different from us?

Really, we're not very different from one another when you get right down to it. I was reminded some years ago of this fact from a medical standpoint – that when you do get right down to it... we're not very different from one another. When you cut any one of us open for surgery, we all look pretty much the same inside – our parts are all in the same arrangement. Our blood types might be different, but they all accomplish the same task. We may look and act somewhat different on the outside... but on the inside, it would be hard to tell us apart – black, white, male, female – o.k., a *few* anatomical differences there, but Democrat, Republican, government official, maintenance person, pastor, teacher, out of work

mom or dad, person living on the streets in Portland... It would be hard to tell us apart on the inside.

Why is it then, we have so much trouble getting along on the outside? Why do we have so much trouble saying “thank you” for one another, for relationships, for life, for God’s presence in our lives? What do you think? (response time again)

Perhaps there is one thing we need to be teaching our children, from the time they can first distinguish their individual selves from others. Perhaps that one thing is that we’re really all very much the same when you cut us open.

Perhaps with that realization, once taught at a young age, children would grow up with respect not only for themselves but for all others – respect for all the variations of the same human theme, the knowledge that we are all cut from the same mold, with the ability to appreciate all of life and a desire to say thank you for all of life.

We learn this morning of an *outsider* healed of a terrible skin condition who turns and gives thanks to Jesus and praise to God for being made new. Nine other *insiders* walk on, healed of the same affliction, but saying nothing.

Here’s a confession this morning – I first delivered most of this sermon on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013 in Lincolnville for the congregation of United Christian Church. I could have written it last night, for the first time, to deliver to you here. Sometimes I think it’s helpful to remember and realize this anxious, unsettling time we’re living in isn’t the first time we’ve experienced a period of a lack of thanksgiving for one another.

Here’s the question for today: Do *we* stop, turn around and give thanks and praise to God for our blessings, and the blessings of one another? Or do we walk on without looking back, without being grateful for one another and for God’s presence in our lives? It’s a choice each one of us can make.

Let the people say, “Amen.”

**Federated Church in Thomaston  
United Church of Christ United Methodist Church  
All Are Welcome  
Sunday, October 9, 2022**

Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet, Pastor Alice Billheimer, Organist/ Choir Director  
Lector: Arlene Woodman

*Please be respectfully silent once our worship service has begun.  
An asterisk (\*) indicates where you are invited to stand.  
**Bold print** indicates that the people speak these responses & prayers.*

## **GATHERING FOR WORSHIP**

### **Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude** "Entree" from Petite Suite by Henry Purcell (1658-1695)

### **Call to Worship**

Leader: Most Holy God, we await the touch of your Spirit with eagerness.

**People: Enter the lives of each one of us today, refreshing and renewing and healing us with the power of your loving Spirit.**

**All: Help us live with purpose and enthusiasm and courage after the manner of Jesus. Let us worship God!**

**\*Opening Hymn** "Many Gifts, One Spirit" #114 Blue Hymnal

### **A Moment of Silence**

**Responsive Reading** "Autumn Speaks" (see insert)

## **SERVICE OF THE WORD**

**Scripture Reading** Luke 17:11-19

**\*Gloria Patri No. 70 Glory Be to the Father....**

**Message** "Were not ten made clean?" Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet

**\*Hymn of Meditation** "He Touched Me" #367 Blue Hymnal

## **RESPONDING IN FAITH**

**Sharing Our Joys and Concerns with God and Each Other**

**Pastoral Prayer & The Lord's Prayer.....**

**Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.**

**Offertory** God So Loved the World --John Stainer

**\*Prayer of Dedication**

**\*Doxology No. 95 Blue “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow....**

**\*Closing Hymn “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior” #351 Blue Hymnal**

**Benediction**

**Postlude** "Sortie" from Petite Suite by Henry Purcell

**Revised Common Lectionary Readings for Sunday, October 16, 2022  
Jeremiah 31:27-34; Psalm 119:97-104; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5; Luke 18:1-8**

**Prayer List --** Hold in your prayers all those affected by the corona virus and the families of those who have died from the virus.... And all those families affected by the use of addictive drugs and alcohol among their members.... And all those dealing with the ravages of cancer near and far..... And all those living through the aftermath of Hurricane Ian....

Please hold in your prayers all those affected by the coronavirus and the families of those who have died from the virus..And all those families affected by the use of addictive drugs among their members And all those dealing with the ravages of cancer near and far..And all those affected, which should be every one of us, by the cruel condition of racism which continues to take the lives of too many of our Black brothers and sisters..And all those who have worked tirelessly for the building and rebuilding of our nation into one people, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all And, from Jackie a request for prayers for Kyle Cloudier..and for Parker’s daughter, who has had brain surgery and is home now!; Enid, Ann Foster, Carol Moss, Julie Pollitt, Zeke Bryant, John Flaherty, Heather Van Buskirk, and for Tiffany, Lucy’s granddaughter... And for Arlene from NH..And for Rev. Wayne Sawyer, And for Amber Thomas.... And for James Armstrong and family...And Dale O’Neal (Kristen O’Neal’s husband who has tonsil cancer). And Jeffrey Northgraves who is receiving treatment for lung cancer.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Tuesday-10/11/22.....7:00 pm: Thomaston Historical Society  
Sunday-10/16/22.....9:30 am: Worship Service  
Sunday-10/16 – 20/22.....Kairos 4 days retreat

Suggested Food Pantry Donation.....Jello

The flowers for the Alter this week are given by Karen Wincapaw

Deacon for October: Galo J. Hernandez III

Reminders for next Sunday, 10/16/22

Greeter/Usher: Kathleen

Anderson

Coffee

Host: Kathleen

Anderson

Lecto

r: Lou

Caron

Fl

owers: Sandra Caron

Collection Total for Sunday, October 2, 2022:

Pledges - \$2357.00

Loose - \$ 18.00

Deacon's Sunday - \$ 13.23

Total - \$2388.23

The 2022 weekly budgeted operating cost for the Church and parsonage is \$1623.00 per week.

**Federated Church of Thomaston  
United Church of Christ  
&  
United Methodist Church  
Together Since 1929**

*Sunday, October 9, 2022*

**8 Hyler Street, Thomaston, Maine 04861 (207) 354-6105**

To contact the pastor via e-mail: [freerangepastor@gmail.com](mailto:freerangepastor@gmail.com)

WiFi password is #1Church

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[1]Appears in *The Spiritual Formation Bible*, NRSV, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1999, p. 1381.