



Grain

“Every time you’re kind to another person you are saying I’d sooner have a relationship with you than be right.” –Richard Rohr

Field

¹¹On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, ¹³they called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” ¹⁴When he saw them, he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were made clean. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. ¹⁶He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then Jesus asked, “Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? ¹⁸Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹Then he said to him, “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.” Luke 17:11-19

Thoughts

Who was this thankful Samaritan, the one in 10 who showed gratitude? We don’t know much about him beyond the location where he and the other nine lepers lived. They dwelled in between Samaria and Galilee, in between two religions and cultures. The Jewish people of Galilee and the Samaritans were both children of Israel with differences in how they interpreted scripture. What they concluded about where to build God’s temple divided them most intensely. The Samaritans claimed the Holy of Holies should be on Mount Gerizim in Samaria and the Jewish people thought scripture pointed them to Jerusalem. We also know the two shared a mutual contempt for each other.

Was the Samaritan leper, who was already viewed as an outsider, an example of someone living in exile within exile or did Jewish lepers at various times experience being in the minority? Perhaps in the borderland they all blended together. Whatever the answer, how thin the differences that render people as outsiders can be. How fragile our status. Did the lepers change internally as a result of living in isolation from their larger communities and then being miraculously healed? Would they return kinder? There may be a correlation between the answer and whether they experienced gratitude.

Richard Rohr says that he suspects that the 9-to-1 percentage in relation to showing gratitude in life is probably accurate. Don’t most of us react easily out of our personal grudges and dissatisfaction. Aren’t we readily offended when we don’t get our own way. We are harsher judges of ourselves and others than God is. For the one who showed gratitude, being right about the location of the holy of holies seemed less important than being in relationship with the holiness in front of him.

Purity laws were important to both the Samaritans and Jewish people. Perhaps the Samaritan would return ready to engage with other unlikely people. Practicing thankfulness and receiving the grace to experience it place us in relationship with our neighbor. May you be graced with gratitude and may your advocacy flow from what you have received. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy