

## Responding to God's Word

by participants in the worship of Elora & Bethany United Churches  
compiled by Greg Smith-Young

Luke 17.11-19

October 17, 2021

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I

This painting of the Ten Lepers is by Bill Hoover. He's an artist in Omaha, Nebraska.<sup>1</sup>

Sit with it for a moment. What does it draw out of you?



We have given 3 weeks to this particular story of Jesus, the ten whom he healed and cleansed, and the one who said thanks.

First, we LISTENED to it a few times over, closely and carefully. It started getting into us. Then, last Sunday, we did some LEARNING about what was going on in this episode.

Today, we RESPOND. What has this listening and learning been doing within us? Has it helped us to see? Understand? Has it led us to new questions and deeper wonderings? What is God calling out from us?

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<sup>1</sup> [billhooverart.com](http://billhooverart.com)

I invited you to share. Here is what some of you offered up. (Shared, of course, with their permission.) After each, we'll say thanks.

First,            One: For Bill Hoover's response,  
                         and for all the wisdom you give through Scripture and the Spirit,  
**All: we thank You, O God.**

II

Lesley Weaver offers this:<sup>2</sup>

*I'm finding this a new way to learn an old story.*

*The thing that has spoken to me most is that the man who expressed his thanks to Jesus was a Samaritan. In our society today, we hear of racial slurs and micro-aggressions toward those who are not white or Christian.*

*What I've noticed more and more is those who are new to this country who are giving back, like saying thank you, or Sikh men dancing in joy, or others are running food banks for neighbours.*

*The more I focus on this part of the scripture, the more open my mind becomes to what is happening around me. I've been paying attention to the thanks being given by "Samaritans."*

One: For Lesley's response,  
                         and for all the wisdom you give through Scripture and the Spirit,  
**All: we thank You, O God.**

IV

An offering from Christine Moser:

*Here I go, After hearing the story again this past weekend, my immediate reaction was I am currently feeling like I have leprosy (oozing with illness and infection) and have been ostracized from being a helpful part of the community with what I can offer due to my vaccination status.*

*I am still the same loving, caring person I was before the pandemic but somehow I have been labelled as something other than that. I have not changed. I'm human,*

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<sup>2</sup> I've lightly edited people's submissions for readability.

*wanting to be loved and appreciated like everyone else. Anger and sadness set in.*

*Then came Tuesday this week where I met an older gentleman outside at a local coffee shop. Instant connection. I felt calm and my loving self shined through. He had just recently lost his wife and she sounded like the person I am and want to still be: loving, caring, giving, sharing, offering my support.*

*Thank you for listening and I hope this has not offended anyone. Feels good to get my feelings on paper and not stuck inside. Many blessings to everyone this morning.*

One: For Christine's response,  
and for all the wisdom you give through Scripture and the Spirit,

**All: we thank You, O God.**

V

This is Amy Weaver's response:

*Through this past one and half years, I know that God has walked beside me and my family. It has been so hard. There have been incredibly low moments. We were all broken, more than once, and we all worked together to piece us back together. Every Sunday we worshipped together on Zoom and it lifted us up to carry on. Jesus' love was there every step, even when it felt like we were empty and couldn't go on.*

*His love was running after us. He never left our sides. He never left your side.*

*The lyrics of a chorus stand out to me and I have listened and sang these words many times over:*

*All my life you have been faithful,  
all my life you have been so, so good.  
In every breath that I am able,  
I will sing of the goodness of God.*

*God didn't leave the men in the scripture. He didn't leave me or my family. He didn't leave you. God is here, and even when I don't reach out to Him, He is there, running after me. Thanks be to God.*

One: For Amy's response,  
and for all the wisdom you give through Scripture and the Spirit,

**All: we thank You, O God.**

VI,

Listen to what Roz Burt offers us this morning:

*First a childhood reminiscence: My dad would visit country Methodist churches when they were fundraising for 'foreign missions' and I would go along to provide the coat hanger for the costumes and artifacts, activities, etc. supplied by Methodist Mission House in London.*

*Since that time I have carried with me an intense awareness of, and sadness for those who suffer from either blindness or leprosy. So those are the appeals that I still hear the loudest.*

*Now for the 10 lepers: I have to put in a good word for the 9! They were doing what they were told to do, and were being obedient to the law. Luke doesn't tell us enough about how far they had gone before 1 returned – and anyway that person was, presumably, going in a different direction to the 9, as that person would be declared 'clean' not from the temple in Jerusalem, but from a Samaritan priest, surely.*

*In their common suffering and isolation the 10 were held together as 'community.' But with the promise of healing, the old feuds that held them apart became more significant again.*

*As we move forward with life with covid-19, we run the risk of changing too. Our 'community' became smaller, closer and more selective. But as things widen again is there a risk that old 'feuds' (racism, intolerance, etc.) will become even more evident?*

*This has been a hot topic for conversation in our home this week. The more we have talked about this, the more we see as 'missing' from the story, but feel that the purpose is to encourage tolerance and understanding for those who come from different cultures and have different beliefs.*

One: For Roz's response,  
and for all the wisdom you give through Scripture and the Spirit,

**All: we thank You, O God.**

VII

And from across the dining room table, Richard Burt's response:

*I have struggled with this passage! The very challenge of letting it percolate, drawing out the full flavor, has worked too well!*

*Luke gives us two clear pointers to the depth of meaning – that 'even a Samaritan' can be an example to a Jew, and that a man's faith is more important than his race. But did the 9 get a bit of bad PR here? All 10 headed off as lepers trusting that by the time they reached their respective priests they would be clean: THAT is a leap of faith in itself.*

*Did the Samaritan suddenly realise that he would no longer be welcome with the other 9 once they were all clean? Were the 9 making their intolerance for this 'foreigner' apparent, so soon after being simply fellow sufferers?*

*Does this passage have modern relevance? Certainly! COVID is not Leprosy. But it has made us keep our distance, just like the lepers had to. Conversely, the threat of the illness drew us all closer together 'virtually' and spiritually such that our differences became less important. We have to be careful that these differences – racial, vaxed/not-vaxed (horrible wording!) among others, don't rear their ugly heads as intolerance once again.*

*Hard to put this into words but would it be reasonable to feel Jesus was disappointed with the seeming lack of gratitude from the 9. Understandable – it's so easy to forget to say thanks!*

One: For Richard's response,  
and for all the wisdom you give through Scripture and the Spirit,

**All: we thank You, O God.**

## VIII

Now, Arlene Callaghan's offering:

*Lately there have been several reasons for me to be thankful, some of which are: onsite care and monitoring, and proximity to the hospital and Trailside Clinic. In my life I have been led to paths that afforded the care and protection needed, particularly as I have spent 30 years living singly. God speaks in mysterious ways, and I feel led. Just when the need was greatest, care of several types have been available close by. Supportive friends are such a valuable part of life, also friends who know God and respond to a need.*

One: For Arlene's response,  
and for all the wisdom you give through Scripture and the Spirit,

**All: we thank You, O God.**

## IX

We'll finish with this response.

The Mafa people live in west Africa. In the 1970s, teams of local leaders, theologians, and an artist began spending time in communities. They shared Bible episodes and people re-enacted them. The artist used these local performances to create paintings. These help people learn the Bible in a way that connects with their lives. The collection grew to more than 70 scenes from the Gospels.<sup>3</sup>

This one is our story. What response does it draw from you?



I feel joy, all around. All the healed lepers, all their friends and neighbours, everyone. And one comes to share his joy with Jesus.

How do you respond?

One: For all our responses,  
and for all the wisdom you give through Scripture and the Spirit,

**All: we thank You, O God.**

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<sup>3</sup> [lentproject.wordpress.com/resources/visuals-video-painting-and-design/vie-de-jesus-mafa](http://lentproject.wordpress.com/resources/visuals-video-painting-and-design/vie-de-jesus-mafa)