

Luke 17:11-19

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."

The word of the Lord Thanks be to God

"Show Yourself"

Courtney Chandler-sermon

The man lived in the small, "in between," space with the others who had been cast aside. There wasn't much space between the two places. In fact, Samaria and Galilee border one another, so this idea of living, "in between," is possibly more symbolic in nature. Wherever or Whatever this, "in between," may be, there they gathered, cast away, living among the unclean. A group of 10 dead men walking. Together they made a community, a family of their own. Their skin crawling with disease and the humiliation and shame that having such a disease brings upon oneself.

He was an outsider, being a Samaritan, but illness doesn't discriminate, and so he made his way into being part of a cast out community with the others. Samaritans were not thought of fondly from the rest of those in Jerusalem.

We see in the bible time and again that Jews didn't deal with Samaritans. In the book of John, Jesus goes to a well and asks a Samaritan woman for a drink and she reminds him Jews do not associate with Samaritans. In fact there was so much animosity Jesus uses the Samaritans as an example in the story of the Good Samaritan. The Jewish people would have understood the significance of a Samaritan stopping to help, because they saw them as being anything but helpful. Yet, even with all this against him, the man had come to be part of this community of, "in between-ers."

Word got out that Jesus was coming their way. They had heard the stories of Jesus and his healing powers, so they concocted a plan to call out to him. They knew they could not get too close, but surely if they called out, Jesus would heal them. They had to simply put themselves out there and maybe, just maybe Jesus would show mercy on them.

The ten stood watching and waiting. They put all fear and doubt behind them when they see him coming and they call out , "Jesus have mercy on us..."

Jesus turns to the 10 men and says to them, "Go. Show yourselves to the priests." They turn to go home and show the priests that they are now healed. Well, all but the one. He cannot. He has no place among Jewish rituals. He is not welcome in a Jewish house of worship. He sees his skin is healed and healthy and not able to follow the others he turns back with joy and thanksgiving and shows himself to Jesus, throwing himself at Jesus' feet. Showing himself to the One who could see beyond the warts and scars, thanking him for showing mercy. Jesus sends him on his way, allowing him to reestablish himself among his community, to reconnect with family and friends. The shame of not being clean enough now gone and he can go forth and become whole again as he reunites with loved ones and is restored back to being the person God created him to be.

Jesus tells him that his faith has made him well. Actually, the Greek word used in this text is, "sozo" which means salvation. Jesus is saying, "Your faith has saved you." According to scholar Rob Myallis, "When Jesus says that the man's faith saved him, we see very clearly that Luke is not suggesting 'your belief in a set of propositional truths gave you keys to heaven.' What Jesus seems to be saying is more along the lines, 'your trust in my word and power motivated action from you that transformed your life in a way that have experienced the salvation of God.'"

What a beautiful story of vulnerability and the willingness to allow oneself to be fragile in order to live into being your true, best self....

Have you ever thought about how much courage it took for this one man, this Samaritan, to go back to Jesus, a Jew? How much courage it took to show himself and give thanks? How much courage it took to allow himself to be moved to show himself fully to Christ?

Brene Brown is a researcher and author and famous for her Ted Talks and even has a Netflix special where she talks about the power of vulnerability and the courage it takes to be vulnerable. She says that what her research shows is that all people want to make a connection and that the thing that keeps people from making connection is shame. She defines shame as being the fear of disconnection. If other people see or know this about me, they won't want to connect with me. The thing that keeps us out of connection is feeling we are unworthy of connection. So, in order for connection to happen, she says, we have to allow ourselves to be seen. Allowing ourselves to be seen is vulnerability. And being vulnerable takes courage.

The root word of courage is cor-the latin word for heart. In the earliest forms of the word it meant, "to speak one's mind by telling one's heart."

Telling your heart, telling your story and allowing yourself to be seen takes courage. The Samaritan man allows himself to be seen, warts and all,

making a connection with the One who says to him, "Your faith has saved you." That is courage. Being vulnerable enough to say, "This is me. This is my story. I am broken, I have things about me that cause me to be stuck in the, 'in between spaces,' which I have felt so much shame over and have caused me to not live into being the person God created me to be," that is how we connect with God...this is how we connect with one another.

Showing yourself is so incredibly difficult. We don't like to let our guards down. We don't like to show who we really are with one another or with God. We want it to look as if we have it all together, as if we live these flawless lives. We go about our day with a smile on our face pretending pushing down the truth and allowing our false selves to be at the surface. Our façade is perfect. Don't believe me, look at social media. People only post the pictures of the clean spaces in their homes. People don't show the ugly chaos. We live in a time where we can take 900 pictures of our children with tears and fighting and we only share the one where everyone is forced to smile and make our lives appear unblemished. We hide the truth from everyone, sometimes even ourselves. The problem with this, is that is not authentic. This is not the way to true connection. This is not how God wants us to connect, not with Godself or one another. And keeping up the act is exhausting and if people knew the truth...if they knew that all is not as perfect as it seems, it can lead us to feelings of shame. If they only knew...no one would think I am good enough...

Here is the thing, God created us to be all we are, deeply human and deeply flawed. And it's ok, because God wants us to come forward and say, "Here I am. This is me." Because when we do, when we no longer hide, we can make the connections we long for.

I am just as guilty of painting a smile on my face and looking having the surface look as if I have it all together. I fear the unknown of opening myself up, and yet, like all of humanity, I long for connection. I long for connection with others and with the divine. So I ask myself, do I have the courage to stand before God and say, "Hey! It's me, Courtney. I'm here...short, stubby and stubborn...my Scottish superstitions still present, gray hair, (it's there, I just pay someone good money to take care of that one), wrinkles, floaters in my eyes, wounds in my soul and scars on my heart...I'm here, God. This is me! Here are a list of my fears and shortcomings. Somedays I feel like I am an absolute mess and I just want to cry. Sometimes I feel like an imposter trying to make everything seem fine on the surface even when it's not. This is me, God. I'm showing myself to you."

And God looks at me and says, "You are loved. You are capable. You are worthy of hope, mercy, and love. You are worthy. Go...be reconciled...be reconciled with your family, your friends, your community, your church...whoever or whatever it is you need to reconnect with, be reconciled with yourself. I called you to love me with all you have. I called you to love

your neighbor. And I called you to love yourself...be reconciled with all three...find your peace, restore the harmony in your life...be well. Be whole. Just Be."

What about you? Do you have the courage to step up and show yourself? Do you have the courage to be vulnerable before God and show yourself? To lay it out there and allow restoration to take place?

In the movie Frozen 2, Elsa is struggling with her role as queen and with her powers. She begins to hear this voice calling to her and it leads her on this quest to discover who she is. In one of my favorite moments, Elsa begins to sing a song entitled, "Show Yourself." In the song, as she is searching and longing for answers she discovers that she is the one she has been waiting for all of her life...she just needed to courage to step up and show herself. The lyrics, "Show yourself. Step into the power. Grow yourself into something new."

When we allow ourselves to be vulnerable by showing ourselves we are stepping into the healing power of being restored and allowing something new to grow from the saving mercy of God who loves us warts and all.

I feel like there is so much more to the story of the Samaritan, I wish I knew what happened when he returned home. I hope that after he stepped into the power of his faith. I hope he was reconciled with his community. That relationships were mended. I hope that peace and harmony was restored. I hope he was filled with his own sense of hope. We know he connected with Christ, I hope he connected with others. I hope he lived into being the person God created him to be and that he showed love and mercy to all others despite their flaws. I hope..

And my hope for you is that you will find a safe space that allows you to be vulnerable and show yourself to God, to a family member, maybe a friend. Let them see what is below the surface. Let them see you for all you are and let them love you not in spite of your imperfections, but to love you even more because of them. This is what God does for us. When we have courage to open up and show ourselves before God, we are saved. Go...show yourself.