Scripture
Luke 17:11-19

Return to Wholeness

We respond to healing with faith and gratitude.

◆ When Jesus heals ten lepers who are living as outcasts, only one man returns
to give him thanks.
◆ Young children are spontaneously glad of good things in their lives, with hearts ready
to give thanks easily.
◆ Today’s session invites children to join with the healed man in giving thanks to God.

Question of the Week
For what are you most grateful?

Core Session
◆ Getting Started (poster board or butcher paper, 36” x 1”
dowel or stick, old magazines)
◆ Gospel Story: One Man Said Thanks
◆ Thank You Snacks (box of cookies or crackers)
◆ Praying Together

Enrichment
◆ Discover the Good News
◆ Singing Together
◆ Fingerplay: Ten Men
◆ Art: Tjakamarra’s Water Dreaming (mural paper)
◆ Info: Tjakamarra’s Water Dreaming
◆ Info: Keeping Session Notes
◆ Info: Young Children and the Gospel
◆ Info: Where You’ll Find Everything Else

Helps for Catechists
◆ More About Today’s Scriptures
◆ Reflection
◆ The Scriptures and the Catechism
◆ The World of the Bible: Leprosy
Getting Started (5-15 minutes)
Before the session cut from magazines pictures of things for which children might be grateful: food, flowers, cats, dogs—people! Across the top of the poster board or butcher paper write the title Thanks be to God! If you have time, decorate the edges to make the poster more visually appealing.

As children arrive, show them the poster you have begun and read its title. Ask each child to add a picture to the poster. Children can draw or cut out their own pictures. You can attach a dowel to the top of the finished poster. Arrange for children to carry it in today’s worship or display it in a public part of the building.

Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)
One Man Said Thanks
Story Focus: If you know how to cut a chain of paper dolls, consider making a 10-doll chain as a visual focus for today’s story. Find instructions and patterns for making paper dolls attached to this document. Place the chain in the middle of the story circle. Touch the figures to accompany each action of the story.

Ten men were standing together near a small village. All of the men were sick. They had sores all over their bodies.

“Stay away from them,” said a woman who was walking by.

“Stay away from them,” said a father to his child. No one would even look at the sick men.

“Oh, look!” said one of the men. “I see Jesus coming.”

All of the men became excited. “Jesus! Jesus!” they shouted. “Come closer and talk to us. We are so sick.”

“Of course I’ll come close to you,” Jesus said. He walked right to the men. Then he said to them, “Go and let the priests look at you.”

So the ten men left to find the priests. As the men walked along, suddenly they noticed something important. “I don’t have any more sores,” one man said. He kept on walking.

“I don’t feel sick any more,” another man said. He kept on walking, too.

“I’m healed!” a third man said. He kept on walking.

“We’re all healed!” the other men said. Almost every single man kept on walking away from Jesus.

But one man turned away from the others. He ran, ran, ran back down the road to Jesus. “Thank you, Jesus!” the man shouted. “Oh, thank you for making me well.” He was the only one who came back to thank Jesus!

Thank You Snacks (5-15 minutes)
Children use a box of cookies or crackers to practice saying thank you to each other. Ask children to sit in a circle. Choose a leader and give that child the box of snacks. The leader walks around the circle and puts the box behind someone.

That child stands up and says, “Thank you, (leader’s name).” Then the child receiving the box becomes the leader. The game continues until every child has had a chance to be the leader. Enjoy the snacks together.

Praying Together (5 minutes)
Gather around the poster made in today’s Getting Started. Invite each child to touch a picture of something he or she likes. Ask children to respond to each picture with the prayer phrase:

◆ Thanks be to God.

Close by praying:
Thank you, God, for all the good things you give us, especially Jesus. Amen.

Note: Distribute At Home with the Good News to group members (or e-mail it to families after the session).
□ Discover the Good News (5-10 minutes)
On page 1 of today’s Discover the Good News you’ll find a rhymed version of today’s story. This is the version used in the fingerplay activity below.

On page 2 of Discover the Good News you’ll find illustrations and some of the lyrics for the song “Malo! Malo!” (Open your Fall-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Companion Music for options on obtaining this music.)

You’ll also find a list of ways to say “Thank you” in different languages attached to this document.

Play “Malo! Malo!” for the children first. Help them explore all the different ways there are to say thanks. Then use page 2 of today’s Discover the Good News to lead a simple discussion with the children on giving thanks:
♦ How do you say thanks?
♦ When do you say thanks?

□ Singing Together (5-10 minutes)
From Singing the Good News, sing together:
♦ “Ten Were Healed” (songbook p. 10)
♦ “Walk in God’s Ways” (songbook p. 7, also available as an MP3)

Note: To access both the songbook and its attached MP3 files, open your Fall-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Singing the Good News.

□ Fingerplay (5-15 minutes)
Ten Men
Teach children the words and motions to Ten Men, a rhymed version of today’s story. First ask the children to show you with their fingers how many men were healed: ten.

Ten men walking, feeling sad.
Walk fingers on ground or lap.
Ten men talking, feeling bad.
Form two talking “mouths” with fingers.

“There goes Jesus,” 10 men say.
“Jesus, won’t you come our way?”
Stretch both hands forward, palms up.
Pull toward you in a “come-to-me” motion.

Jesus comes and 10 men pray,
“Jesus, make us well today.”
Touch ten fingers together in a praying gesture.

Ten men start to walk away.
Walk fingers away.
“Look, we’re well,” all 10 men say.
Form two talking “mouths” with fingers.

One man turns himself about.
Hold index finger up and move in circle.
“Thank you, Jesus,” one man shouts.
Raise index finger in a “we’re-number-one” gesture.

After the Fingerplay:
Ask the children if they can think of anything to thank God for today—sunshine, parents, breakfast, pets, etc.

□ Art (10-15 minutes)
Tjakamarra’s Water Dreaming
Gather children around Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra’s painting Water Dreaming, attached to this document.

Ask children to tell you what they see in the poster. Can they find circles in the poster? Can they find lines in the poster? The artist drew circles and lines to show things to find and ways to get there.

Ask the children, “If you were in this poster, where would we find you? If Jesus were standing on this poster, where do you think we would find him?” Encourage different children to offer different answers to this question.

Tape a sheet of mural paper to a work surface. Offer children markers or paints and brushes. (Protect Sunday clothing with smocks; even old shirts will do.)

Ask a volunteer to draw or paint a circle for Jesus on the poster. Invite other children to draw or paint circles for themselves on the poster. Then invite the children to draw or paint lines or paths on the poster. Where could their paths go?

Not all young children are able to respond to an invitation to draw circles or lines. Many are still drawing scribble patterns when they paint. Others may draw lines straight to Jesus. Be sure to accept all the children’s choices without praising one or ignoring another.
**Tjakamarra’s Water Dreaming**

The painting attached to this document, titled *Water Dreaming*, is by an Aborigine (an indigenous Australian) named Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra. He lived from 1932 to 1993. Tjakamarra was also a politician and a Lutheran pastor.

The style of the painting is typical of traditional 20th century Aboriginal paintings, which use recognized icons or symbols to create natural scenes that often had spiritual meanings. Like many of these paintings, *Water Dreaming* is painted from a bird’s-eye view, as if looking down from above.

The last part of the title—“Dreaming”—refers to the aboriginal belief in the *dreaming* or *dream-time*, a mythological period without end or beginning when eternal, god-like creatures created the world and its inhabitants. Concentric circles (“targets”) like those seen in *Water Dreaming* can represent water holes, natural springs or other “sites,” like a village, a nesting ground or the den of an animal. Concentric circles with arms or paths radiating from it also represented a water hole.


**Keeping Session Notes**

If you haven’t already done so, think about writing notes after each session. Write down the interests of individual children. Comment on which activities worked best for you and why.

Use your findings in several ways: to engage children in individual conversations, to write personal notes to absent children, and to plan interest areas. This last idea can help you reduce discipline problems—children interested in their learning environments are less interested in disrupting group time!

**Young Children and the Gospel**

In today’s gospel, Jesus heals 10 lepers, but only one, a despised Samaritan, returns to offer thanks.

Today’s session invites preschoolers and kindergartners to offer thanks to each other and to God.

Today we also begin an exploration of prayer that will continue in the sessions for the 29th and 30th Sundays in Ordinary Time. Although popular culture stereotypes the prayer of young children as always asking God for something, this is not typical of preschool or kindergarten prayer. More typical forms of spontaneous prayer for these children are:

- praise
- thanksgiving
- adoration

Some traditional prayer forms worth sharing with young children are brief thanksgivings, litany responses, repetition of a beloved Holy Name, silence, song and gesture. We will explore several of these forms.

Today we begin with the traditional phrase, “Thanks be to God,” used in both the Getting Started and Praying Together activities.

**Where You’ll Find Everything Else**

- Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
  - Backgrounds and reflections for today’s readings, titled *More about Today’s Scriptures*.
  - A printable version of today’s *Gospel Story* for use at home (to distribute or e-mail to families).
  - Instructions and patterns for making *Paper Dolls* for telling today’s gospel story and for use in free play.
  - A listing of how to say *Thank You in 14 Languages*.
  - Instructions for a Story Review activity called *Thanking with our Senses*.
  - Instructions for a “Thank You, God” Game.
  - Tjakamarra’s *Water Dreaming*, to be used in today’s Art activity.
  - A family paper, *At Home with the Good News*, to print and distribute or to e-mail to families for use at home.

- Open your Fall-C Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Seasonal Articles to find:
  - Information on Fall-C’s *Models of the Faith*.
  - A helpful article why *Using the Arts in Religious Education* is an important faith-formation tool.
  - An article for catechists and/or parents exploring *The Lectionary and the Church Year*.
  - The *Introduction for Preschool/Kindergarten for Living the Good News*.
More about Today’s Scriptures

Today’s readings remind us of the wholeness we experience when we allow God to heal and forgive. In the story from 2 Kings, Naaman’s healing leads him to acknowledge the one true God. In 2 Timothy, Paul reflects on the centrality of Jesus Christ, who is himself the good news, bringing salvation. In today’s gospel, 10 lepers receive healing; one healed leper receives salvation.

2 Kings 5:14-17
The books of 1 and 2 Kings, originally one volume, tell about the Davidic monarchy and its successive rulers in the kingdoms of Israel and of Judah. These accounts also explain the deterioration of the two nations’ political standing and conclude with the final collapse of Jerusalem to the Babylonian empire.

In today’s reading, the author tells of a Gentile’s conversion as a result of his encounter with the God of Israel. Naaman, a commander of the Syrian army, developed leprosy. His wife’s slave, an Israelite girl, told him about the prophet Elisha who, because of his relationship with God, could heal Naaman.

When Naaman finally meets the prophet and hears his prescription, he feels humiliated. Naaman had hoped for a word of power, not a call to obedience that required him to wade into the grimy Jordan River. Only Naaman’s servants are able to appease his sense of outrage and convince him to do as the prophet had commended.

Naaman’s submission brings him into new life, both physical and spiritual. He becomes a visual testimony, both to wayward Israel and to the Gentile nations, that only faithful obedience and an attitude of trust can lead to wholeness and a right relationship with God.

2 Timothy 2:8-13
Today’s reading consists of an eloquent last testament of Paul (vv. 8-10) and a quotation from a baptismal hymn (vv. 11-13), sandwiched between some proverb-like sayings (vv. 3-7) and advice on dealing with heretics (vv. 14-15). The sayings use favorite metaphors of Paul’s to urge single-minded commitment, self-discipline and labor for reward.

Verses 8-10 consist of a brief credal statement and a reminder that the apostle can still minister, even in chains. The hymn recalls the reality of baptism, perhaps in answer to persecution and the temptation to deny Christ. Even then the Lord is faithful.

Luke 17:11-19
The story of the cleansing of the 10 lepers is found only in Luke. According to law, the lepers stand at a distance. Jesus tells them to show themselves to the priests for restoration to the community. Like Naaman in 2 Kings 5:10-14, they are cleansed at a distance.

The point of the story, however, is not in the healing but in the response. Jesus, the impartial healer, gives grace to all and receives thankful homage only from the foreigner. The leper’s faith has made him whole and has also saved him. The healing is real for all but is not equivalent to salvation, which requires an inner change of orientation. As this story is juxtaposed with last week’s parable (17:7-10), we learn that Jesus’ disciples are exhorted not to seek thanks but to give it.

Reflection
The difficulties with today’s gospel shouldn’t stand in the way of its clear message. We might wonder why the “other nine” are criticized when they have done exactly what Jesus told them to do: report to the priests. We might be troubled by Jesus’ rhetorical question about the missing lepers, when he knows perfectly well they haven’t returned. And he seems condescending to categorize the one who expresses his thanks as “the foreigner.”

Scripture scholars have explored those problems, but conclude that the focus of the story still remains on the question of gratitude and ingratitude. Although leprosy may not threaten us as it did ancient peoples, we still run the risk of ingratitude. Perhaps our blessings are not as dramatic—the restoration of a fallen finger would grab one’s attention—but we still tend to minimize them: the kindness of a stranger who pours our coffee and keeps the cup refilled, a sunny day after rain, good health, a coworker with a magnificent sense of humor. Unfortunately, some people become grateful for their greatest gifts only when these are threatened: a loved one falls ill, a job is lost, a home vanishes in a tornado. May today’s Samaritan teach us the close connection between gratitude and a full, joyful life.
The Scriptures and the Catechism

God heals not only our bodies but also everything that holds us back from the right kind of relationship with God and others (CCC, #739, 798, 1484, 1499–1513). We are reminded of the intricate connection of salvation with physical healing (in the gospels the same Greek word is used for both save and heal) and so of our responsibility to promote life and health for ourselves and our society (CCC, #2288–91).

The World of the Bible

Leprosy

When leprosy is mentioned in the Bible, it does not necessarily mean the disease we now identify by that name (also known today as Hansen’s Disease). The Greek word for leprosy included a variety of skin diseases, such as fungal infections, eczema, ringworm or psoriasis.

Leviticus 13 describes the steps to be taken if a person developed any such skin disease. The priest decided whether the skin eruption was leprous and, if so, the person was isolated for seven days. If the disease progressed, the person was declared unclean and required to live outside the boundaries of the community.

Neither the quarantine nor the separation was based on the thought that the disease itself might be contagious, a relatively modern concept. Rather, the leper was considered ritually unclean or impure. Such uncleanness could be communicated; thus it jeopardized the pure life and worship of the community.

Lepers were required to live outside the towns, to wear ragged clothes, and to cry out to passers-by, “Unclean! Unclean!” (Leviticus 13:45–46). Such behavior demonstrated their grief at being separated from the fellowship of God’s people and the temple worship of God. Obviously such separation also prevented any normal way of making a living and impeded human companionship, other than that of their fellow lepers. Bands of lepers often traveled about together, begging for charity.

Leprosy was considered to be a mysterious act of God and was not caused by the patient’s own sinfulness (unlike other afflictions). Thus the healing of a leper was considered to be a miracle of divine intervention. Jesus includes this type of healing in his reply to John the Baptist’s inquiry, “Are you the one who is to come?” Jesus replied with evidence that, in and through him God’s purposes were being realized: “the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them” (Luke 7:22).

Detailed instructions are given in Leviticus 14 for certifying the cleansing of a leper. The priest had to examine the person and render an opinion as to the healing. Sacrifices were offered and ritual bathing performed; only then might the person rejoin family, neighbors, and the worshipping community.

The Bible also refers to leprosy in garments (Leviticus 13:47–59) and on the walls of houses (Leviticus 14:33–53). These conditions were undoubtedly some kind of mildew or rot. Measures had to be taken to eradicate the condition, but the people involved were not declared unclean.

Of the writers of the synoptic gospels, Luke mentions lepers and leprosy more frequently than Mark and as frequently as Matthew. Given that Luke is a Gentile writing to Gentiles, he is concerned to show that Jesus’ mission as Messiah extends beyond the boundaries of Israel and beyond the social limits imposed by the law. Jesus heals a Samaritan leper who returns to give thanks, a sign of several things: his authority to heal lepers (an act of God as understood by the Jews), the universality of the mission of redemption (even Samaritans and Gentiles are included), and a sign that the promised kingdom has dawned.