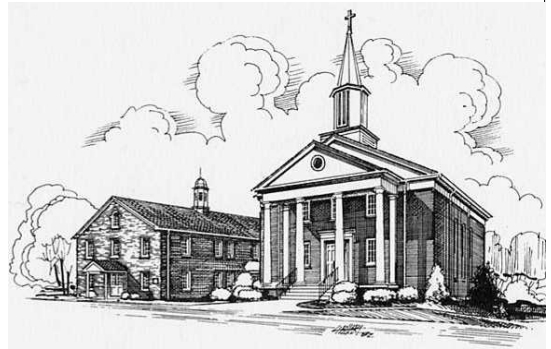


# The Lessons Appointed for Use on the Sunday closest to October 12



Proper 23

Year C

RCL

2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15c  
Psalm 111  
Luke 17:11-19

## The Collect

The Collect

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, that we may continually be given to good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the

Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15c

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

When the king of Israel read the letter, he

tore his clothes and said, “Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.”

But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, “Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.” So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha’s house. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean.” But Naaman

became angry and went away, saying, “I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?” He turned and went away in a rage. But his servants approached and said to him, “Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, ‘Wash, and be clean’?” So he went down and immersed himself seven times

in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel.”

Psalm 111

## *Confitebor tibi*

1 Hallelujah!

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, \*

in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

2 Great are the deeds of the LORD! \*

they are studied by all who delight in them.

3 His work is full of majesty and splendor, \*

and his righteousness endures for ever.

4 He makes his marvelous works to be remembered; \*

the LORD is gracious and full of compassion.

5 He gives food to those who fear him; \*

he is ever mindful of his covenant.

6 He has shown his people the power of his works \*  
in giving them the lands of the nations.

7 The works of his hands are faithfulness and justice; \*  
all his commandments are sure.

8 They stand fast for ever and ever, \*  
because they are done in truth and equity.

9 He sent redemption to his people;  
he commanded his covenant for ever; \*  
holy and awesome is his Name.

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; \*  
those who act accordingly have a good understanding;  
his praise endures for ever.



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 that 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.”

## SERMON

It's late at night. A glimmer of the moon's light shines on a corner of the baby's room as you tiptoe in to gaze down upon her in her crib. In that moment, that instant, your soul is filled with the peace of her sleep and you are beyond yourself. That's an experience we all share. Try to tell someone who hasn't experienced that and you quickly find out just how hard it is to put something so wonderful into words. Words can say what seeing that moonlight on the baby was LIKE, but words cannot capture the experience. Yes, if that other person has looked in on a sleeping baby, he or she will be able to re-

late to what you are saying, but not because of the words you chose. The words you form are different than the actual experience. Just telling about it makes the peace of a baby's sleep mundane — it strips it of its miracle. Today, I want to talk about living in awareness of God's peace.

I took the dog out Tuesday night with a head full of noise. I usually have some idea by Tuesday what I will preach on Sunday, but not this week. I had nothing and the voices in my head were chattering so loudly that I couldn't think. It really bothered me. I'm a creature of habit, you know. I like to see things stick to the

schedule. It's one of the ways I convince myself that I am in control of my own life.

If that were all that happened, this would be a much shorter sermon, but of course that's not all that happened. For the life of me, I can't find the right words to tell you what happened. I experienced a healing, certainly, but in the same way that you can't quite capture in words the peace of a sleeping baby, as soon as I try to put what I experienced into words, it becomes something less than it was. Some things just can't be expressed in words without changing them. Here's my best shot.

Sukie and the voices in my head went to the

yard. It was already dark and there was a thin mist of clouds as well, through which I saw the moon shining. It was just a glimpse. A blink. No angels. No harp music. No display of heavenly intervention. Nothing but the moon shining through a thin mist of cloud, but in that blink, the voices quieted and a great silence filled my soul. In that glimpse, I was the baby in the crib, loved and adored, cared for and cared about. In that glimpse I was assured that God is in charge of all those things that vex me and I am safe in His love. I was healed of my anxieties AND of my self-imposed responsibility to manage God's creation. I lost my breath!

Nothing had happened, yet something had happened. Suddenly, in place of my anxiety over what I should preach today and my ceaseless attempts to manage my life, a great peace filled me. A huge burden was lifted. God is in His heaven, all is right with the world, and I, a small part of the world, am healed as well for He holds the whole world in his hands.

I always thought that if God wished to speak to me about something I should share with you, there would be lightning and thunder, or a great voice, or some heavenly display.

But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, “I thought that for me he would

surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy!”

Nope. None of that. Just the moon, lightly covered with the mystery of God’s presence with us, radiating God’s love for all His children, even the difficult ones, the foreigners and those we fear.

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram.

Aram was a region of Syria, including present-day Aleppo, so you can imagine what the relations were between the king of Aram



and the king of Israel. The region was a powder keg then as now. Aram, under the command of this same Naaman, regularly raided Israel, taking captives.

Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife.

The young girl who had been abducted from her home told of a miracle worker in Israel who, she said, could cure Naaman's leprosy.

So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. And the king of Aram said, "Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

The king of Israel reacted to this letter just as you would expect him to do. He was infuriated.

When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, “Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.”

I am convinced that at that moment, even as he tore his clothes, even as beads of fury appeared on his face, even as his screams of anger and fear echoed through the palace, that the moon shone through a thin mist of clouds above him but he did not notice. How could he? He was too involved in what was before him. And that is the connection between us and

the king of Israel. Not all of us have eyes to see a glimpse of the moon behind a mist of cloud. And even those who do are often so involved in what is before us that we might be excused from failing to notice. Failing to notice, though, does not remove the miracle and the obligation to respond in gratitude.

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 that 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?”

To live within God’s love is to live a life of celebration and gratitude. For those who live in awareness of God’s presence with us, God’s love is as unmistakable as the light of the

moon. We live within the ocean of God's mercy, miracle upon miracle, if we only have the wit to see. Our only proper response is to spend our days in gratitude. To our shame and loss, we are so consumed with the cares of the world that we often perceive only the moon, not the miracle. Glance up, church, to the source of God's miracle of life.

AMEN

## BENEDICTION

He's got the whole world in his hands

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and  
be gracious to you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and  
give you peace.

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Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.

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