

## Exude the faith that make us well.

October 9, 2022

Jeremiah 20:1, 4-7 Luke 17: 11-19

I love new words. When I find definitions of words that I have not read or heard before I know I have received something precious and exciting. Maybe that is one of the reasons I also love reading about and hearing from Jesus who John the Evangelist called “the Word made flesh.”

The word that I stumbled on this week is exude, from the prayer “Help us to exude the faith that makes us well.”

One definition of exude is to “discharge (moisture or a smell) slowly and steadily.” “The beetle exudes a caustic liquid.” Well that was interesting, but I am not sure it was what the writer of our morning prayer was trying to put into words. It seems to me that God is not exactly delighted when we burn incense to reach God’s nostrils but rather, when we praise God for the simple joy of it.

A second definition of the word exude is “To display (an emotion or quality) strongly and openly.” Now that seems more like it. Like when the Samaritan leper praised God with a loud voice. Or this from our Call to Worship, “Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth; sing the glory of God’s name.”

When we were children, my father began dinner by saying grace. The words that he said were not original but what I loved about them was how he prayed. Loudly, in his big base Dad voice, he directed his prayer to the One who blesses us even when are too little to understand. “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, bless us O God and these thy gifts which we are about to receive, from Thy bounty, through Christ our Lord Amen.”

Dad’s grace was more praise than piety. He was always hungry for supper and grateful for every chance to gather with family. Dad, I hear you now, exuding joy! You always put flesh on the words.

In Luke’s story Jesus saw ten lepers at a distance. He heard their prayer. “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” Then he sent them home to their priests who would be shocked to see ten lepers who, for years, (because their skin disease was deemed spiritually unclean) had been kept at a distance from their community. Now they were not only clean but whole. I hope against hope that they received a welcome as strong as my Dad’s table blessing.

One of the lepers saw what happened to him in his encounter with Jesus, even at a distance. He rushed back to Jesus to offer praise by calling out with a loud voice something that might sound like “Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise God *all creatures* here below.”

Which was all fine and even great but when he prostrated himself on the ground in front of Jesus, Jesus instructed him to “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.” Not “I made you well” but “Your faith made you well! Get on with your life!”

Jesus’ question “Where are the rest of them?” goes unanswered. The way we rarely get an answer when we ask the whereabouts of people who have gone missing; the people who do not pivot and praise God.

I love how this gospel story is paired today with the reading from Jeremiah. The prophet was writing to those Jewish citizens exiled from Jerusalem into the foreign lands of

Babylon. Jeremiah counsels the exiles to give themselves fully to life in their new circumstance.

Build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat when they produce. Make families and above all, seek the welfare of the city where you have been sent and pray to the Lord for the welfare of that city, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Friends this was the text that was on my heart 10 years ago when Dorrie and I left Amherst to come to Shelburne Falls. My prayer then was, how are we really going to make this little bustling town home? What are we to do here? Now this text is showing up again as we head back to Amherst where we will once again seek the welfare of another town. Is God saying "Marguerite, get up and go!"

As we prepare to leave our lovely parsonage home in Shelburne Falls, both of us are already praying that you will continue to call on God to help you through this time of change. To exude your faith *so that you will be well*. We are praying that you continue as you have done for so many years to *give yourselves fully* for the welfare of the community in Shelburne Falls and the surrounding towns. For in its welfare you will find your welfare. This is how we make the word flesh.

Let me end as I often do, with a prayer of thanksgiving. This one comes from the Reverend Steven Garness- Holmes.

Thank you, God, for all the ways I have been healed.  
For health in my flesh, the miraculous way  
    my body knows how to heal itself.  
For your healing of my self-esteem,  
    the gift to see myself whole, as you see me.  
For the renewal of my relationship with you,  
    gratitude where once there was doubt.  
For the healing of my hope,  
    trust where once there was despair.  
For the restoration of relationships,  
    forgiveness where there was brokenness.  
For the healing of community,  
    inclusion where there was division.  
For the mending of the world,  
    where, whether there be disease or not,  
    and people able-bodied or not,  
    whether there be justice yet or injustice still,  
all shall be well,  
    and all manner of things shall be well. Amen.