



My Beloved Ones,

This Sunday's Gospel reading is a very surprising and moving testimony of gratitude for all of God's wonders. The Evangelist tells us that Jesus was visited by ten lepers when entering a village. Lepers, of course, were outcasts because of their condition—but our Lord has already made His Ministry known to those who are sick and suffering, and so these lepers cry out, "*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!*" (Luke 17:13) Our Lord tells them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests", and they are made well. However, of these ten, only one returns to thank Christ. Even more surprising, that man is a Samaritan.

We must remember the difference between Jews and Samaritans during Christ's ministry. Each group worshipped God in different ways: Jews worshipped the Lord in the Temple, but the Samaritans worshipped Him on Mount Gerizim. It is for this reason, and many others, that the Jews and Samaritans considered each other an anathema. This is the reason Jesus says, "*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?*" (Luke 17:18-19) Our Lord does not say this to be critical, but out of true surprise. All these lepers turned to God out of a true sense of need, but the moment they were cured by the Lord, they were "too busy" to return to offer their thanks.

This Sunday, we will remember the life of Maximos the Confessor, who is a perfect example of standing up for Christ. As he was unwilling to keep silent against the heresy about Jesus having only one will, St. Maximos was cruelly tortured: his hand was caught off, and his tongue was cut out, to keep him from correcting this error. Terrible as this was, Maximos knew that he alone in the Eastern Roman Empire *was "...found to return and give praise to God..."*

Though we will hopefully never see the kind of persecutions St. Maximos suffered, we must ask ourselves: how do we see God? Do we behave like the nine lepers, who look for God to help us in times of distress, but forget Him once the storm passes? Or are we like the Samaritan: instead, do we seek Him, and, when He has comforted us, fall at His feet in prayer and thanks?

Our Lord says to the cured Samaritan, "*Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.*" (Luke 17:19) St. Maximos understood that the role of a true Orthodox Christian was to seek God in all things—even if everyone else leaves us to stand alone. May we all have the strength of faith to cling to Lord—not only in times of distress, but joy and beauty as well.

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