

Thanksgiving Eve
November 21, 2018
Luke 17:11-19

The first thing I think about when I hear the word “depreciation” is cars. Depreciation is a big thing with cars. Right now the number 2018 is causing depreciation. The 2019 models have been introduced the price on 2018 models is going down. They are losing value. And when you buy a car and drive it out of the showroom the value goes down even further because it’s now a “used” car.

My father-in-law was not into interior decorating. He would not have cared if the inside of his house ever changed. So it was a big event when he not only allowed the purchase of a picture to be made but allowed it to be hung on the wall. My wife was very excited. The picture featured a beautiful young woman playing a grand piano in a beautiful Victorian house. My wife played the piano and it was almost like the picture allowed her to be in an entirely different place. The picture had great value to her.

Then one day a friend came over. Sandie could not wait to show the friend the picture. When he saw it the friend said, “It’s a nice PRINT.” Boom! Depreciation. Instead of celebrating the value my wife found in the picture, that one word and his attitude caused it to be devalued.

Appreciation, the addition of value, is a much nicer thing. It took me a while to become a fan of Brett Favre. As a young player he made a lot of bonehead decisions. But he played with passion. And, while he continued to do some stupid things, he also did remarkable things.

One day I saw an autographed picture of Favre on sale. The Packers had had a pretty rough season and the price had been dramatically reduced. I bought it. And then there was the whole retire, get traded, retire, join the Vikings thing. I knew that the value of the picture had dropped even lower.

But you know what has happened. There were the whole “return to Lambeau” thing. Favre was inducted into the Packer Hall of Fame and the NFL Hall of Fame. Now he’s a beloved legend and I’ve seen the price of the picture I have shoot up in value. Brett Favre has become appreciated by fans and his memorabilia, and its value, has appreciated, too.

Leper. It was a word that caused the depreciation of a person. We know Leprosy today as Hansen’s disease. It’s a bacterial disease that causes nerve damage and the lack of feeling in a person’s body. Because they have a loss of feeling, Lepers cannot feel pain in many parts of their body. Pain has an important function. It tells us when something is wrong.

When Lepers don’t feel pain, they can’t tell when they are injured or cut. They cannot tell when body parts are infected. Infections cause damage to tissue and it can cause the decay and loss of body parts. Leprosy can cause horrible disfigurement.

Other people didn't want to become Lepers so they made rules to keep from being infected. Lepers needed to stay away from people and even shout "unclean" when anyone came near. They couldn't live with their families. They could not have jobs. They couldn't be in public places. All they could do was beg.

In our lesson today ten lepers are begging together. Usually they begged for food or money. Today they begged for healing. Jesus was passing by. They had heard of the great things he had been doing including acts of healing. They shouted out, "Jesus, Master, have MERCY on us." We've talked about mercy a lot lately. They were asking for healing. They didn't deserve it but they needed it . . . badly.

All Jesus said was, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." That's it. On their way they were healed. Their disease was gone. Their isolation was gone. Their limitations were gone.

But only one came back to say thank you. Did the other nine not appreciate what had happened and who had made it happen? We don't know, but one did. One of those who had been healed returned. He valued Jesus and what he had done for him. Jesus declared, "Your faith has made you well." The healing was more than skin deep. Appreciation had helped heal the leper's soul.

Tonight is the Eve of Thanksgiving. Do we appreciate all God has done for us? What do we value? What is valuable in our lives and do we acknowledge that we have merciful gifts from God?

"For you." Those words will be spoken over and over again tonight. Wafers of bread will be given. Chalices of wine will be offered. But it's more. The body and blood of Jesus will be shared. The simple meal seals the promise of forgiveness. It's a foretaste of the feast that will come when we gather in the heavenly kingdom. It's a meal that's value comes from the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus. Do we appreciate what it means, the gift of God's unconditional love?

This is a time to realize our appreciation and share it. What do we appreciate in our lives? Who do we appreciate? What are we thankful for?

And when we give thanks we find healing. When we value all God has done and appreciate his goodness, we just might find our faith has made us well. AMEN