

Ambushing the Lord or Ambushed BY the Lord

Intro. The law of the day said anyone with leprosy was cast out of the community of family and worship. One had to live in the deserted places and shout a warning to let people know to keep their distance so not to spread the dreaded disease. This day, the men shouted for help. How did they know who the Lord was and what he could do for them?

I. Apparently the word had gone out even to the abandoned places lepers inhabited. Someone had gone to tell them of this rabbi who made miracles. So there they were, ten men without life, without hope. Until now. The Lord stopped and acknowledged their presence, something most people refused to do. He **saw** them as men, not lepers. Immediately he responded to their cry for help. He told them to go and show themselves to the

priest. That's it? No raised hands; no healing formula? Just go. They were supposed to take his word. And so they went and *on the way* they were healed. How did it happen? Instantly? One moment the leprosy was there and then not. Or like in a movie: the new, unblemished skin slowly creeping down one arm, then the other, then up the face. In the first reading we are told of Naaman, a powerful foreign army general who had leprosy. His life and career were over. A captured slave from Israel begged him to seek out a prophet there who could heal him. He resisted but finally went to Elisha who told him to dunk himself in the Jordan River seven times. He scoffed at that simple action. His slave said if the prophet had told him to do something really *difficult* he would have done it. Why not listen and do this *easy* thing and be healed. He did and

found the word spoken by Elisha was powerful. In thanks he tried to give Elisha a gift, but the prophet refused because the healing came from God not him.

Concl. The men with leprosy somehow knew the Lord would be passing by and “ambushed” him. They were *waiting* for him. This time they didn’t shout a *warning* to keep away, but shouted for him to *help*, for him *to come near to them*. It was a last hope for a life again; to be reunited with their families and their identity as men. They *and* Naaman had faith in the word of God. Contrast *their* faith with that of Apostles’ lack of faith last week. Naaman and the Samaritan gave thanks to God for the gift of healing. A healing neither of them as outsiders expected to receive. The ten men put themselves in a place to meet the Lord. But true to human nature, only one gave thanks. When we want

to meet the Lord, how do we do it? We too often wait for him to find us in the middle of our technology and the noise of our daily life. Instead we could figure out where he will be and “ambush” him like the ten men did. The places where God is most likely to be found aren’t difficult to discover. His presence can be found in the majestic eagle I saw soaring over the river at the retreat center. The Lord can be found in his house, this church. And certainly in our worshipping community and in Communion. If we put ourselves where we think or believe the Lord will be, **we have a much better chance of finding him and he finding us. And healing us.**

Fr. Michael Pendergraft,

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