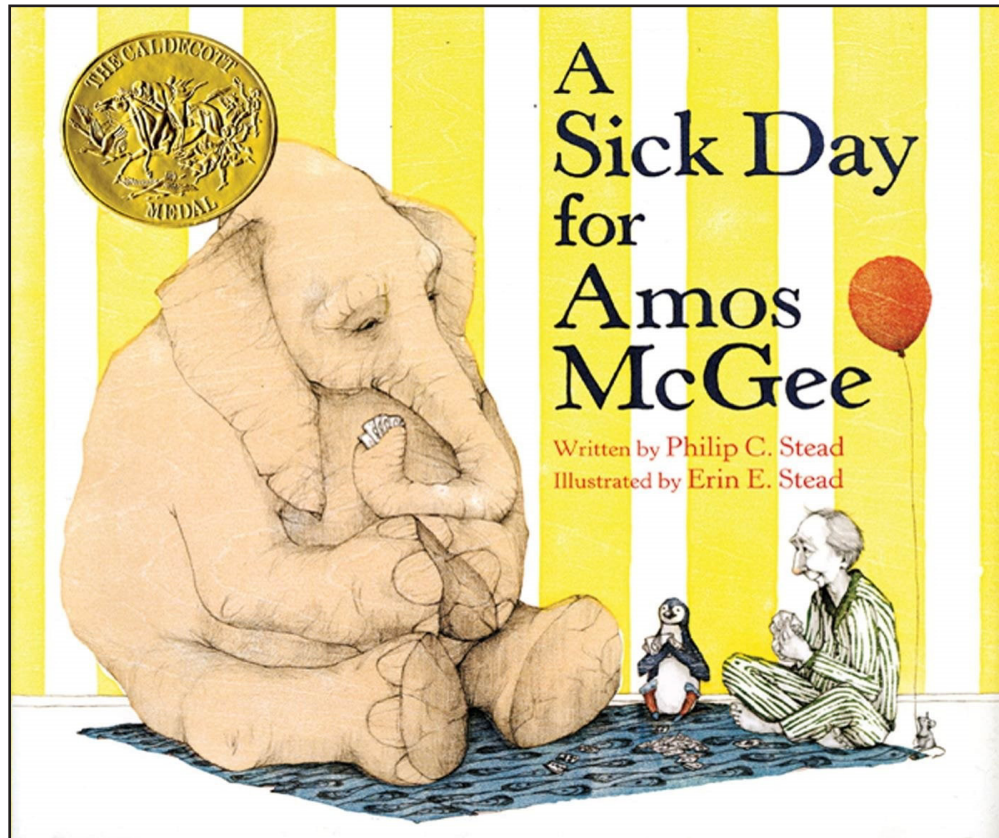


Living Grace

Cycle C 28th Sunday
Ordinary Time

“PRACTICING KINDNESS BRINGS ABOUT THE BEST
KIND OF BANK ACCOUNT”



*In **A Sick Day for Amos McGee**, we meet a zookeeper who always makes time to visit his good friends (the animals he cares for) and always gives them exactly what they need. Every day he spends a little bit of time with each of his animal friends at the zoo, running races with the tortoise, keeping the shy penguin company, and even reading bedtime stories to the owl. One day, however, Amos wakes up with a terrible cold and decides that he won't make it to work. Because Amos is a reliable friend, his dear friends start to wonder where he is. Getting worried, the animals leave the zoo and hop onto the #5 bus to Amos' house. Each animal stretches beyond his own fears to help a sick friend when the roles are reversed, and he needs their kindness and comfort. Here we find a beautiful message about the powerful impact of gratitude and kindness!*



BEN'S BELLS

Ongoing Community Project ~ Tucson, Arizona

Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKc0WOtnxeM> ~ Website: bensbells.org/

EXPLORING THE ART:

Ben's Bells is an innovative organization that grew out of one family recognizing the of the life saving grace of kindness in their time of greatest need. The mission of Ben's Bells is to teach individuals and communities about the positive impacts of "intentional kindness" and to inspire people to practice kindness as a way of life.

The Importance of Intentional Kindness: Recent research demonstrates that kindness benefits our physical and mental health, and that recognizing kindness in others increases a person's happiness and satisfaction. But just as solving a calculus problem requires advanced math skills, the challenges of daily life require advanced kindness skills. By focusing on kindness and being intentional in our personal interactions, we can improve our ability to connect. The mission of Ben's Bells is to inspire individuals and communities to engage in kindness education and practice.

Ben's Bells Kindness Education Programs are based on the belief that everyone has the capacity to be kind, and that kindness can be cultivated through intentional practice. Kindness is a universal topic with opportunities for education, recognition, and celebration in a variety of venues, including schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities.

In addition, helping to create Ben's Bells is an artistic activity that is perfect for team building, character education, grief response, rehabilitation, personal enrichment, and entertainment. Whether molding from clay, painting, or assembling the pieces - anyone can be a part of the mission of promoting, educating, and inspiring "intentional kindness" throughout our communities.

Living Grace

READ-ALoud STORY



ABIDE IN ME

Vicki Shuck, Esperanza Arts

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love.

~ John 7:7-9

Read-aloud video link:

A SICK DAY FOR AMOS McGEE

Written by Philip C. Stead & Illustrated by Erin E. Stead

Sunday Gospel

LUKE 17:11-19

As Jesus continued his journey to Jerusalem,
he traveled through Samaria and Galilee.

As he was entering a village, ten lepers met him.

They stood at a distance from him and raised their voices, saying,
"Jesus, Master! Have pity on us!"

And when he saw them, he said,

"Go show yourselves to the priests."

As they were going they were cleansed.

**And one of them, realizing he had been healed, returned,
glorifying God in a loud voice;
and he fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him.**

He was a Samaritan.

Jesus said in reply, "Ten were cleansed, were they not?"

Where are the other nine?

Has none but this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?"

Then he said to him, "Stand up and go;
your faith has saved you."

Making the Connections

FOR ADULTS

UNEXPECTED KINDNESS HEALS AND GROWS BRIDGES OF FRIENDSHIP AND COMMUNITY, BREAKING DOWN ALL KINDS OF BARRIERS.

Jesus is traveling through Samaria which would have been an untraditional path. The Samaritans were a sect of Judaism in conflict with the Jewish people of Jerusalem, so Jesus was basically traveling through enemy territory. When he comes across a group of lepers, he hears them calling out to him, knowing that he was a healer. He heard their cry for healing and was moved by their expression of true faith that reached beyond the societal divisions of the day. In a very wise move Jesus honored their identity as Samaritans and sent them to their own priests for healing. As they went (faith in action), they were healed. All healing from God is for the individual and the community. Jesus demonstrated that acknowledging our own needs, and being dependent upon the love and grace given to us through our fellow man, is the dynamic that brings healing and transformation.

In our children's story, Amos, the zookeeper, goes beyond the call of duty. His only real task is to feed the animals, but he goes beyond it to extend friendship and kindness. The animals aren't a part of his real family, but that doesn't stop him, and is faith and service saved him in his own time of need. In the times of Jesus, Jews weren't required to help Samaritans, but Jesus goes beyond the expected norm and heals others beyond his family, even people who are against his family. There is great joy when we break out of societal norms fueled by God's healing love.

The lesson of this healing story goes deeper still. Like the lepers, even after experiencing the grace and healing offered by Jesus, not many people will acknowledge God as the source. The person who goes beyond their own healing to realize and acknowledge the source, is the person who is called to serve. This person living a life of service, is not only healed, but will become a healer of others.

The fundamental message here is we need one another. Even divided groups have gifts of life to offer each other. The core dynamic that resides in being a member of the Body of Christ, is the humility that we can not make it alone. Self-sufficiency is not "the way" of the Kingdom of God. Jesus wants his disciples (and us!) to understand this through this example of faith in action.

Making the Connections

FOR CHILDREN

YOUR STORY: Has anyone ever surprised you with kindness? How did that make you feel? Have you ever poured out kindness to someone else? How did that make you feel?

THE CHILDREN'S STORY: How does Amos establish a bank account of kindness? How does Amos' love and care for the animals help him in return?

THE GOSPEL STORY: Who are the lepers of our day? Name some groups that are divided against each other like Samaritans and Jews were. Why does the one leper come back to Jesus? How are Jesus and Amos both motivated by love and care? Do they bend the norm to demonstrate it? In both the actions Jesus with the leper, and Amos with the animals, how does faith save them?

How can you go beyond what is expected and shock people with love and kindness? How might that come back to you one day?

Biblical Background

LUKE 17:5-10

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: Jesus is leaving Galilee in the northern third of the land of Israel and moves southward to Jerusalem. He has a large following as they come to the “border” of Samaria which is comprised of the land between Judah in the south and Galilee in the north. The middle third. There is no official border crossing, but all know that certain villages are in Samaritan territory, and this group of Jewish pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover at the Temple might not be welcome. The listeners would have known this.

TERMS: Leprosy This is not Hansen’s disease as we think of leprosy today, but rather any sort of outward appearing skin condition thought to be very contagious. Lepers were put in the company of other similarly diagnosed persons until their condition cleared up or through healing directly from God.

Samaria This is the central region of the land that makes up a third of the land mass that constitutes Israel in the time of Jesus. Samaritans are Jews who live in that land and who worship God at their own Temple site. Samaritans were thought of as dissenters of mainstream Judaism but still Jewish. This division grew nearly five hundred years before this story unfolds in the life of Jesus.

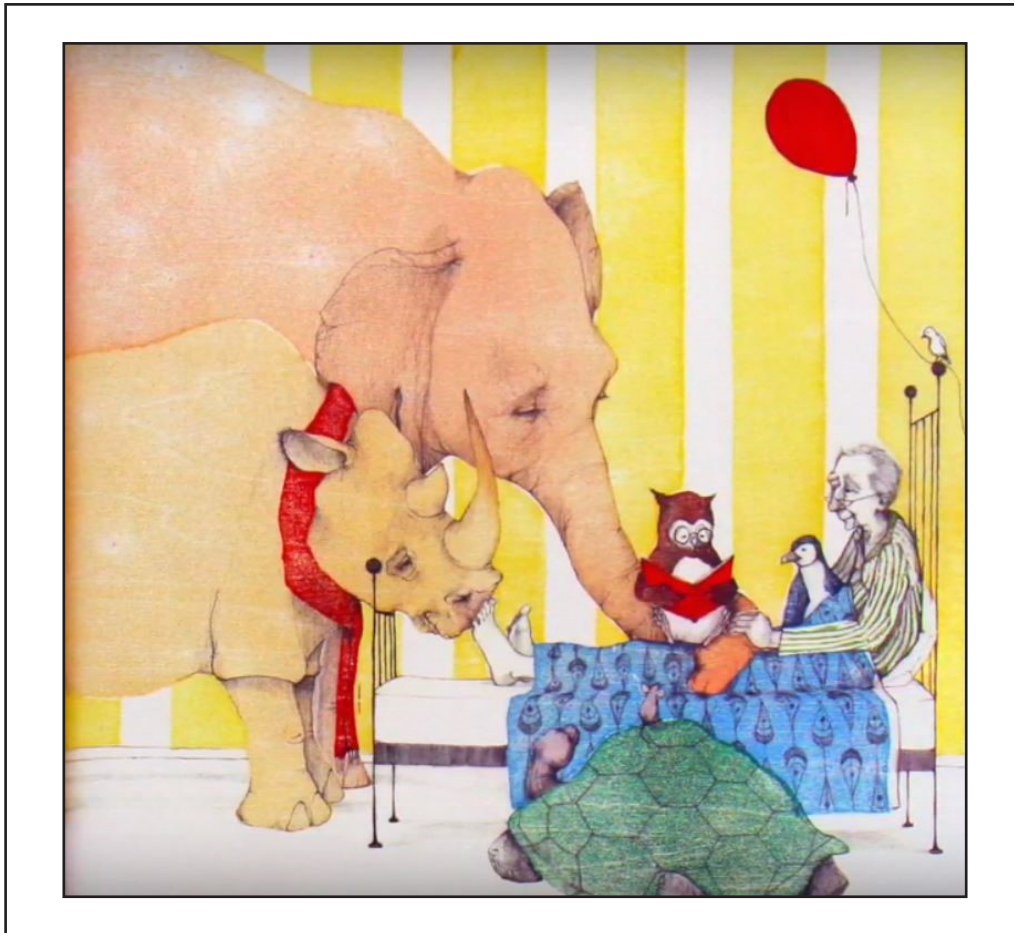
Samaritan These people are of Jewish identity who chooses to worship the God of the Jews at an alternate Temple site on Mt. Gerizim. There is a deep-seated resentment between Jews who worship God in Jerusalem, and those that worship at the alternate Samaritan site.

CULTURAL INSIGHT: There is only one of the ten Samaritan lepers who returns to give thanks as he may have been the only Samaritan among those requesting healing. He knows that he will never see Jesus again since he is going to return to his home village in Samaria. Jesus understands this but still honors him. “Where are the other nine?” They are on the way to report their healing to the priests. Their healing is a testament to the priest that God’s Messiah is on the move. Jesus would have been pleased that they were taking this message out in nine different paths as he sends them away. They too, would then return healed to their original villages either in Judea or Galilee.

INSIGHT INTO MEANING: Illness makes for unusual associations. The common ailment that afflicts these ten brings them together in a bond of fellowship that would not be possible outside of their situation. The Jewish and Samaritan lepers lived together as social outcasts, while their outwardly manifesting skin condition was evident to all. Once healed they will never share the same fellowship again. This is a unique situation in their life and the community. Their skin condition would have been diagnosed by a Jewish priest who would make the determination after careful consideration, quarantine, examination, and final assessment. It is not done lightly. At this stage of separation from family and friends your only real hope is for divine intervention. This is what Jesus provides and will be the message of the ten “evangelists” when they report to the priests, that first examined them, that they have been healed directly through Jesus by God. This will create quite a stir in the various regions they are from.

Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME
AND IN THE WORLD



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: Does it hurt to say thank you sometimes? Does it sometimes hurt not to? Brainstorm ways as a family to make saying thank you a priority.

GOSPEL CHARACTER QUALITIES: **KINDNESS**
GRATITUDE

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: Learn more about the story of Ben's Bells. Brainstorm ideas as a family how to participate in random acts of kindness for a week. Collect data of the effects of the positive ripple of kindness going forth. How might you keep this practice going as a family?

BEN'S BELLS

Watch video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKc0WOtnxeM>

Go to website <https://bensbells.org/>