

13th October 2019 (28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

2 Kings 5:14-17; Psalm 97(98):1-4; 2 Timothy 2:8-13; Luke 17:11-19.

'Your faith has saved you!'

Last week's gospel reading started off with a prayer: 'increase our faith,' the apostles asked Jesus. Today's gospel ends with a declaration: 'your faith has saved you!' The apostles want to grow stronger in their faith, while the ten lepers have enough faith and trust in Jesus to come and asked to be healed.

To be a leper in the time of Jesus was a terrible burden to carry. Lepers had to live isolated from other people, because it was believed that leprosy was highly contagious. Luke tells us that Jesus meets these lepers in 'no man's land,' along the border between Samaria and Galilee. The lepers announce that they are close, as is required by the law, and then ask for healing.

For the early Christians, leprosy was a symbol of sin; Jesus heals the lepers just as he also heals us from sin. Jesus sends the lepers to see the priest, because it was the priest's duty to check and declare a leper healed from his illness. On their way to the temple, they realise that they had been healed. One of them, a Samaritan, turns back to thank and worship Jesus for the miracle. Jesus asks: where are the other nine? Were not they healed also? One wonders what conversation happened between the other nine and the Samaritan when he told them that he was going back to thank Jesus!

Healing, salvation, is a gift given to all of us. While last week Jesus instructed the disciples that they should not expect to be thanked for being faithful and for responding to God's call, today he teaches them that they do have a duty to thank God for his gifts and for his salvation.

My faithful relationship with God should lead me to be grateful to God for his many gifts. I show my gratitude to God through my faith filled response to his call, by worshiping God and by our gratitude. Perhaps I might need to reflect today on how I express my gratitude to God in my daily life. How quick am I to turn back and fall down on my knees in an act of worship and gratitude?

The only leper who turned back to thank Jesus, was a Samaritan. Like the good Samaritan in the parable who was the only one who stopped to help, this Samaritan is the only one who was good enough to go back and thank God. This man understood what it meant to be marginalised. He was marginalised because of his religion and again because of his illness. I need to have the same attitude of this Samaritan in thanking and acknowledging God for his goodness to me.

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