

## 8.00am Sermon for October 13<sup>th</sup> 2019 – Luke 17:11-19

We all know this parable. A typical “ordinary act of healing”, if there can be such a thing!

To set the scene: It happens in no-man’s land, the border between Galilee and Samaria. And you might remember, simply put, that they have strong differences of faith in the nature of God and where to worship: in the temple for Galilee; on a mountain for the Samaritans...

“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us” cry ten lepers. What was Jesus’ response? “Go and show yourself to the priests”. It was as they did this that they were made clean...They obeyed. They trusted what he said. They were healed, made clean....

What an amazing thing! Can you imagine? The implications of this freedom would have been immeasurable .... And what happened next? Well one, a Samaritan, came to Jesus, threw himself down at his feet in praise and worship and thanked him...

A famous reformist, Martin Luther, described the true nature of worship as being, “The tenth leper turning back”. It’s true that this act of healing points to the way God’s healing grace but there’s more to it. It’s not so ordinary because the one returning is the “foreigner”, the outsider ...

God is acting in and through the ordinary here... all borders, boundaries and barriers of class, race and anything else that smacks of marginalisation and inequality...But then Jesus asks, “Where are the others? Weren’t they made clean?” I suppose you could say that they were only doing what he said, going to the priest...

“Is it only a foreigner who comes to me in thanksgiving?”, he asks, and here’s the difference: Jesus says, “Get up and go on your way. Your faith has made you well.” Other translations say “Saved. Made whole”. This is about wholeness.

For sure, the healing of a physical affliction is a mighty act of grace. But in the end, if you think about it, this is only a reprieve for a short while in the eternal scheme of things, because our bodies, by the laws of nature, will become frail, affected by the physical demands of everyday living and conditions and by the laws of natural decay as time goes on. And we will die and leave this earthly life....

But wholeness, that’s a different thing. What has happened here is that while this leper has experienced the same as the others, he also sees much more. He has recognised Jesus, and his power and authority, and it is that which underpins his thankfulness. He changes direction, turns from the priest, sees beyond the priest, and returns to Jesus. The Samaritan, the stranger, has seen Jesus and what he has seen makes all the difference.

His body, healed for now, will become frail again. But the invitation given through the actions of Jesus: To trust him, have faith and receive God’s spirit of love through him, and to be led to a place of freedom through the promise and hope of eternal life ( promised regardless of physical conditions) is what has made all the difference... and which brings the healed man to his knees in worship and thanksgiving...

This parable calls us to see Jesus, to receive the blessings of wholeness. To claim mercy, wherever we are in our material and physical lives, and to then point out God’s blessing and loving promise of peaceable life to others, with all the courage and welcoming heart that we can muster...

We give the last words to Jesus. “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well. Made you whole.” Amen.