



Luke 17:11-19

11 On the way to Jerusalem Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he entered one of the villages, ten lepers came to meet him. They stood some way off 13 and called to him, 'Jesus! Master! Take pity on us.' 14 When he saw them he said, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' Now as they were going away they were cleansed. 15 Finding himself cured, one of them turned back praising God at the top of his voice 16 and threw himself at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. The man was a Samaritan. 17 This made Jesus say, 'Were not all ten made clean? The other nine, where are they? 18 It seems that no one has come back to give praise to God, except this foreigner.' 19 And he said to the man, 'Stand up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you.'

Other readings: 2 Kings 5:14-17 Psalm 97 (98) 2 Timothy 2:8-13

This story of the healing of the ten lepers is unique to the Gospel of Luke. It takes place as Jesus continues his journey to Jerusalem. The ten lepers, people with a virulent skin disease who due to its contagious nature were not allowed to live in the village, had obviously heard of the powerful healings of Jesus. They 'stood some way off' and called out.

In Luke chapter 5 Jesus had touched and healed a leper. In this case he does not heal the lepers straightaway but rather sends them off to report their state of 'uncleanness' to the priests. Jesus is respecting the religious rules of Judaism, but the lepers never reach the priests since 'as they were going away they were cleansed'.

The second part of the story concerns gratitude for God's healing. Only the Samaritan shows gratitude for his healing. In the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus had set a Samaritan before us as an example of love of neighbour. The Samaritans were despised by the Jews due to religious differences, and yet it is the Samaritan who is the only one of the ten to show gratitude and praise God for his healing. Jesus asks: 'The other nine, where are they?'

The man who was doubly an outcast, due to his sickness and due to his race, hears the words of salvation: 'your faith has saved you'. Is the evangelist implying that the fulness of salvation was not given to the other nine? They received an extraordinary gift from Jesus, healing of the body which was a sign of the coming Kingdom of God, but they did not understand the sign and showed no gratitude for it. They received God's gifts without acknowledging the giver. Is gratitude then essential for salvation?

Am I truly grateful for the gifts of God?

Am I willing to see the goodness of God in those who are despised?

Let us pray for courage in the face of illness and disease.

Let us pray for those who care for the sick, and those who offer healing.