



Sunday, 13th October

17th Sunday after Trinity

Luke 17 11-19

Psalm 66 1-11

Homily

Today we are thinking about thankfulness and its relationship to faith. Last week's Harvest Festival and Lunch were real examples of faith and thankfulness. I can't deny that preparing the meal in an annex that bore more resemblance to a building site than a food preparation area was somewhat challenging. But what we also saw was the coming together of the Christ Church family, faith and thankfulness manifesting themselves in physical practical action. Whilst a small team were clearing up in the annex, a large group of unsung volunteers cleared and folded tables, washed up, and generally restored the church to its normal state. Thank you to everyone who played a part whether before, during or after. In the words of the average soccer coach – you done good!

In our gospel reading today, Jesus cures ten lepers, but only one comes back to say 'thank you'. Jesus says that the faith of this man has healed him, but what does he mean by these words?

Perhaps he meant that although all ten lepers were healed of their illness, only the one who came back to thank God and Jesus was **fully** healed. He was healed by his faith in God and understanding of who had healed him, even though he was an outsider, a Samaritan, and not one of God's chosen people of Israel.

Our Old Testament reading a couple of weeks ago was also about leprosy. The person who was healed was so grateful that he would give Elisha anything, but Elisha's servant showed total lack of understanding of the free gifts of God that Elisha was giving by healing Naaman (if you wish to remind yourself of that passage, you'll find it in 2 Kings 5..

Psalm 66, which we've just heard, is a song of praise that shows the wisdom of gratitude for all things God has made.

Faith is at the heart of thankfulness, since faith leads to trust and trust leads to hope and hope realised leads to thankfulness.

It is not easy to be thankful in our world today. The Franciscans, followers of St Francis, believe that the one important thing needed in life is to remain in love. For in John 15 verse 9, Jesus says to his disciples: 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.'

When we are eager to follow Jesus and so become more loving ourselves, we can see love and goodness in the world around us and that helps us to be thankful. This idea of remaining or abiding in the love that is shown in Jesus changes our lives into a real everyday practice of simply trying to follow Jesus.

There is no secret moral command for knowing or pleasing God, or what some call 'salvation', beyond each one of us becoming a loving person in mind, heart, body and soul. Then we will see what we all need to see, the love of God everywhere around us, and be thankful for it. For Jesus did not say, 'Be right'. Jesus said, 'Be in love'.

So this is how the faith of the leper healed him. He learnt that love is the most powerful force on Earth and he met this in the man who was all love, Jesus. His life was transformed for ever as he understood the reality of God and the goodness all around him, and he was thankful for it.

The rest of the lepers are perhaps more like us. Maybe they were too busy rejoicing to say thank you. Our moods mostly rely on the ups and particularly the downs of our lives. We often spend time too focused on our own problems, which means that we do not notice the kindness of strangers or the world's beauty around us.

However, our lives *can* be transformed. Just like the grateful leper, we too can become more aware. Our faith can truly heal us and we can indeed practice living in love and with a thankful, grateful heart for all God's gifts. Loving Lord, let it be so for us all. Amen.

Questions to ask ourselves

1. What is it in your life that you are most thankful for today?
2. What in your community are you most thankful for today?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

Almighty God,

You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you;

Pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself

And so bring us at last to your heavenly city

Where we shall see you face to face;

Through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,

Who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

One God now and forever, Amen.

Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England, material from which is incorporated in this service paper, is copyright © The Archbishops' Council, 2000. Scripture passage from the New Revised Standard Version (Anglicised) copyright © 1989, 1995 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.