**Slide**

10 ordinary people united together.

What could it be?

Did they go to the same school?

Do they all play in a ukelele orchestra?

Are they all staff at a hotel?

What unites them?

**Slide**

Leprosy

In biblical times, one illness was leprosy. Anyone with sign of leprosy would be socially banished, only to be grouped together with other lepers to be a *community of sadness.*

There was understandable great fear because how contagious these infections were. No family, no way to support oneself with work, totally at the mercy of others. To be looked upon with fear, as an object of terror, and a complete loss of identity…no longer the individual person you once were. Now just a leper with no hope of changing your circumstances.

**Slide**

On the way to Jerusalem, these lepers cry out for help. Ten lepers approach Jesus but keep their distance.

They are used to distance, from family, community, and worship.

The law told them to keep away; society told them they didn’t belong. When they cry, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us,” they speak for all *who long to be seen* and restored – for all who carry the weight of rejection because of illness, identity, poverty, or circumstance.

Jesus- no dramatic gestures, just….go and show yourselves to the priests.

Vulnerable stuff….

Who says thank you?

**Slide**

Sasha- She’s a physics teacher and loves football and Mexican food.

Doug- He’s a lab technician at Addenbrookes hospital doing research in rare forms of cancer. He loves dancing the salsa and is learning the samba.

Louis- He’s a professional violinist. He studied at the Royal Academy of music. He likes watching the Traitors and has a pet guinea pig. He volunteers with the RNLI.

**Slide**

Helen- She runs her own cheese making company. She has a herd of goats and employs 20 people in her company.

Syd- Sydney, a veteran American GI who served in WW2. He married a British woman, and settled in the UK, he worked for Sainsburys.

Jade- Jade is 15 and studying for her GCSEs. She’s hoping to study law and continue her hobbies of surfing and she works part-time at a local Costa Coffee.

**Slide**

Maria- Maria originally from Spain. She worked as a private hairdresser to the late Queen Elizabeth. They were both known for their love of sombreros.

Dave- Dave is a builder, specialising in Eco-friendly timber framed buildings. He volunteers at the hedgehog sanctuary and can make a mean strawberry pavlova.

**Slide**

Jenna- Jenna is an architect but likes nothing more than getting on with the build. She runs marathons in her spare time and is fluent in Mandarin.

Min-Min- She has a Phd in Oceanography and is a leading speaker in plastic pollution in the seas. She is working on a seaweed based product that captures microplastics.

**Slide**

Whhooo-hoooo…….thank you! Who has the most to gain by returning to their previous life? Who has the most to be thankful for?

The one who returns is a natural born enemy of the Jewish people. The schism between the Jews and the Samaritans was deeply entrenched.

Slide

Where are the other 9? His question carries no anger, only sadness – the ache that gratitude has not been expressed. Healing is not complete until it becomes thanksgiving.

**Slide**

This one Samaritan man is full of gratitude and physically turns back to give his whole hearted thanks and praise.

**Slide**

Why did the 9 not go back?

**Slide**

Just as significant is the journey. Jesus is *on the way* to Jerusalem; through the borderland between Samaria and Galilee – a place of reconciliation. It is there, between histories and hostilities, that God’s new world begins. The Church, too, is called to live in that space: not safely behind our own lines but standing where difference meets grace and healing.

**Slide**

Where our own communities might have such borderlands – the in-between places? Places of awkward silence, misunderstanding, or separation we prefer to avoid? Places that aren’t obvious, not ‘church’, but places of encounter.

Would we choose to travel through this “in-between” region?