

4th October 2026

Luke 17.11 - 19

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed.

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him – and he was a Samaritan.

Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

Reflection

Our Gospel reading today is a somewhat curious passage which raises a lot of questions. And today two of them jump out particularly:

Firstly, we may wonder along with Jesus, why did one of the men come back to thank Jesus whereas the other nine didn’t?

And secondly, what does this have to do with harvest?

Well, the easy answer to the second question is that the story reminds us to stop occasionally and offer thanks to God – or in a less churchy language, to say thank you God. Which is what we do at Harvest.

But honestly, is that it? I mean, yes it is right to say thank you to God for all the good things he has given us. Just as the Samaritan man came back to thank Jesus for his healing. But look at Jesus’ response: *Rise and go; your faith has made you well.*

There is an inference here, if we care to look, that the true healing comes from thanking God; and therefore not just thanking him for the good things he has given us, but also for the things we might not have chosen for ourselves. As the 23rd Psalm reminds us:

Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

So here is our first harvest fruit, if you will: if we can find it within ourselves to give thanks to God through the more difficult times as well as the good ones, then our faith will increase, which is part of the healing.

And our first question, why did only one of the men turn back to give thanks?

Well, we cannot know the workings of their hearts, only God knows that, but here are some thoughts.

To start off with, it is important to remember that this is not one of Jesus' parables, it is a recollection of an actual event.

We are told that the event took place in a village on the border of Samaria and Galilee, and although Jews and Samaritans did not usually mix it is possible that these ten men were forced together because of their isolation from society due to their leprosy.

We may recall from the book of Deuteronomy that Moses commanded the children of Israel that anyone being healed of leprosy had first to show themselves to the priests in order to be declared clean. The Samaritan man had no chance of seeing a Jewish priest, so either he was travelling separately from the others to see a Samaritan priest, or he was so amazed at being healed that he started out with the others before realising that his personal journey would be fruitless.

And so, in returning to Jesus, the Samaritan not only thanked him, but recognised Jesus as priest, in which case Jesus' words "Your faith has made you whole" take on a completely new authority and meaning.

Hopefully these little musings have shed some more light on this story. And in conclusion I offer you one last thought about our other question: what does this have to do with harvest?

Perhaps this: The Kingdom of Heaven, that place where God reigns, draws its harvest from all people who call on God, and offer him thanks. They may not be practising Jews, they may not be regular churchgoers, but if they call out to God and offer him thanks, is that not worship? And so we, who call ourselves by Christ's name, have a beautiful, wonderful role to play in helping them to find reason to thank God, by meeting them in their need. Such as providing them with gifts of food and whatever else. These small acts of ours, a tin of beans, a packet of soup, whatever, are helping to gather in the harvest of the Kingdom.

Thanks be to God.