

9 October 2022 Luke 17:11-19 Pastor Fraser Pearce

Good news: we can take the gratitude that we feel
And take it to Jesus.

It doesn't matter what our class or gender or ethnicity,
As we turn to Jesus and give the thanks we have to him,
We receive the salvation of our souls.

Let's get straight into the text:

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee.

One the way to Jerusalem: not just a geographical destination,
But a destiny.

Back in chapter 9 we hear Jesus foretell his death and resurrection.

The Son of Man must undergo great sufferings, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.

Then we read: **When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.**

So, Jerusalem is a place full of significance:

It is the place where Jesus will fulfill his mission.

So: to say Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem,

Is a bit like saying a prominent politician is on their way to the lodge:

They might go from Adelaide to Perth on *their way to Canberra*.

It doesn't matter that the journey is not geographically a straight path,
The destination defines the significance of the journey.

Now Jesus is in spiritual no man's land,

Between Samaria and Galilee:

Between ethnically and religiously close but distinct groups,

Joined in proximity and hostility.

Do you remember a key question at play between these two groups?

The right place of worship.

This is part of the discussion between Jesus and the woman at the well

That we read about in John 4

There the woman says to Jesus, **Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews say the place where people must worship is Jerusalem.**

In reply Jesus says to her: **You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him.**

Keep this in mind as we hear the rest of the narrative,
Because we are going to hear about a Samaritan man,
Who prostrates himself before the flesh and blood human being Jesus,
And gives thanks to him, and is saved.

It is in this location, between Samaritan Samaria and Jewish Galilee,
That Jesus encounters a group brought together in their need:
As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!'
The lepers were socially distanced,

And it will become evident that they are likely a mixed group:
Samaritans and Jews forced together by sickness.

There is a fellowship in sickness: think of a hospital ward.

Or think of a twelve step group.

Or think of us here together, and the common need we confess.

These lepers ask Jesus for mercy, for help.

In the Gospels, when people call on Jesus by name for help,
He shows them mercy, he helps them.

The name Jesus means 'The Lord Saves'.

In our reading they also call Jesus 'Master': a term of respect
For those who don't yet know who Jesus really is.

What Jesus does is perhaps unexpected:

He does not lay hands on them, or proclaim his healing word.

Instead we read this: **When he saw them, he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.'**

Now in Leviticus it says that priests had the role
Of examining people with skin disease, and, if they were healed,
Of declaring them clean, and welcoming them back
Into the worshipping community.

Jesus simply tells them to go for the examination:

Like telling someone who has covid, with all the symptoms,
And asks for help, to take a RAT.

Well, they go, and the text says: **And as they went, they were made clean.**

They were made fit to come into the worshipping community.

There is, we could say, an act of faith here:

They hear Jesus' word, and they do as he commands,

And they find more than they hoped for:

Not just some form of aid in their need,

But healing for their bodies.

Now what happens next brings us to the heart of the narrative: **Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.**

Let's break this up:

On his journey he sees that he is healed,

And, it seems, before he has shown himself to the priests

(And which priests he was going to is unclear:

Samaritan priests or Jewish priests?),

He turns back to Jesus, praising God.

Literally: glorifying God: this is what the angels do

At the incarnation: God is near, to glorify him is the right response.

Then the man prostrates himself:

He falls on his face at Jesus' feet.

Picture the body language here: it's the image of adoration:

This is something that one would do in the presence of God.

More than this, he thanks Jesus:

He recognises Jesus as the giver of the gift of healing.

It's at this point that the text specifies that the man is a Samaritan,

That he is a man who before did not know whom he was worshipping,

But in coming to Jesus, in glorifying God,

In falling on his face at his feet, and in thanking him,

He comes to the one in whom God is worshipped in Spirit and truth.

In response to this Jesus asks a series of three questions,

Addressed, evidently, not to the man,
But to whom? To himself? To his Father? To us who hear his word?
Then Jesus asked, 'Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?'

The Samaritan returned and gave praise to God,
By falling at Jesus' feet and thanking him.
Jesus uses a significant word in describing the man, *foreigner*.
It's the only time the word is used in the Gospel,
But it is a word loaded with significance:
The word used on a Greek inscription on a wall in the temple courts,
To mark the point of exclusion, on pain of death.

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, to take the penalty of death,
For all people, for foreigners, for us,
To show mercy for us in our need, to bring us salvation.
And so our text ends: **Then he said to him, 'Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.'**

Your faith has saved you: your trust in me has given you,
Not simply healing for your body,
But the salvation of your soul:
You are part of the worshipping community of the people of God,
Your body will be raised to new life.

In this text Jesus shows us who he is, and what sort of Saviour we have.
His path to the cross, to the resurrection,
Encompassed helping those in need,
And bringing those outside the kingdom of God
Into his gracious presence, to receive the gift of salvation.

We are free to be people who confess our sins,
Who live in obedience to Jesus' commands,
And who turn to him,
Who, in adoration, give thanks to him.
As we give thanks to Jesus for the great blessings we have received
In keeping his word, we receive more than we could ask for,
Even the salvation of our souls.
In Jesus's name. Amen.