

## Homily – Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2019 – 6 pm

You might have noticed that we had two gospel readings this evening. This is because I wanted to make a connection between what some of you may have heard this morning, and the gospel reading set for this evening.

When I was considering this morning's gospel reading, that story of ten lepers, all healed by Jesus, only one of whom returns to say thank you, what I was most struck by was the difference between healing and being made well. Let me try to explain. As Luke tells the story, the ten lepers ask for mercy, are told to go to the priests, and as they do so they are healed. Even though only one returns to say thank you, all have been healed. All are cured of their disease.

So why is it that Jesus tells the story of the one who returns to give thanks? Who turns back, praises God, prostrates himself before Jesus and gives thanks?

It is striking to me that, following these events, Jesus says to the Samaritan leper, "Get up and go on your way. Your faith has made you well." In Luke's writings, the phrase "get up and go" means that a significant change is about to take place. After the Annunciation, Mary gets up and goes to Elizabeth; the prodigal son decides to "get up and go" back to his father; God tells Paul to "get up and go" to Damascus. Somehow it seems that while all ten lepers were healed, there is a significance in the Samaritan leper's decision to give thanks. It is this act that sets him on a different path, that begins a process of transformation.

And somehow this idea of our response to God's call, of the significance of that response, is developed in the second reading, which comes from the Farewell Discourses in John's gospel.

Let me be clear. I am not saying that God's love is dependent on our response. We know that not least because all ten lepers are healed even though nine do not appear to respond. But there is something about our response, our willingness to enter into a relationship with God, that is transformative.

This is what Jesus talks about in John's gospel. Jesus commands his disciples to love one another. Faith is all about relationship. It is all about our willingness to love. The idea is taken further when Jesus refers to his disciples as friends. They have been chosen by God to live in relationship with God. And by taking this seriously, by seeking to love, we are transformed. Our lives bear fruit.

Jesus doesn't pretend that any of this is easy. The Farewell Discourses are that extraordinary combination of encouragement and inspiration, coupled with a recognition of all that living out a life of love will mean for Jesus himself – and perhaps for those of us who seek to follow in his footsteps, too.

A couple of weeks ago the Right Reverend Michael Curry – who preached at the Harry and Meghan's wedding last year – spoke at St. Paul's Cathedral. He spoke passionately about what it means to follow Jesus. Of the call to love God, love our neighbours, and love ourselves. As some people picked up in the questions, it sounds gloriously simple, and yet it proves to be rather more difficult when we try to live it out. But it is our calling as followers of Jesus. And every time we remember to love, we make a difference. And the more we remember, the greater the difference. God calls us to a life of love. Let's commit ourselves once again to living that out in our daily lives. Amen.