



28TH SUNDAY, ORDINARY TIME

SACRED HEART CATHEDRAL

BENDIGO

2 Kg 5:14-17; 2 Tim 2:8-13 & Lk 17:11-19

Whilst we have the example in the first reading today, where Naaman expected God would want to cure him in some magnificent way, God chooses to come to us in what is ordinary. Today we hear that when continuing his journey to Jerusalem, Jesus, heals ten lepers – we see how this story is a lesson about faith and reminds us that faith is sometimes found in unlikely places.

Furthermore, the strong message is that all we need is faith, faith like the Samaritan leper, to see and believe and fall prostrate at the feet of Jesus to receive his salvation.

This gospel story of Jesus is certainly about faith, but is also about the importance of gratitude; but there are other dimensions to it as well. One of these is Jesus' outreach to those on the margins. Lepers were some of the most outcast people in a society fearful of contagion. They were "unclean" physically, driven out of the community and even their own families, but also seen as under judgement from God. Curiously, among them is a Samaritan leper, twice outcast for his disease and as a hated foreigner, yet part of the motley group of lepers.

Jesus lets these "untouchables" approach close enough to cry out for mercy. He sends them to the priests to show themselves for validation as fit to re-enter the community and, on the way, they discover that they have been healed. The nine Jewish ones go joyfully as instructed to the priests, but the Samaritan, awestruck that even *he* was healed by this Jewish preacher, Jesus, returns to thank him.

Something more than a physical healing has occurred: The Samaritan leper has been "saved." He has felt and responded to the deeper gift of eternal life flowing from Jesus. "Stand up and go, your faith has saved you," Jesus says. The Samaritan has been "raised up" beyond human healing to new life in union with Jesus. The other nine were healed, but they have yet to understand the deeper invitation to eternal life that comes with faith in Jesus.



A short time ago, Pope Francis' call to leave the comfort zone at the centre to go to the margins of the Church is explicit in today's Gospel. Jesus is among the outcasts, the poor, the unclean, aliens, refugees and strangers, regardless of their race or religious faith. To welcome them, even sinners and enemies, is to accompany Jesus beyond the borders of theological and cultural security in a world polarised by fear. This is where the Good News is needed and where we come alive to the new life Jesus gives to us as disciples.

We are all untouchable until we know the healing touch Jesus gives freely to anyone who comes to him. Once blessed, our own touch extends to others the same compassion and risen life we have received. This is the meaning of our baptismal cleansing and mission to the world. This is so much needed in our world today!

Recently, Pope Leo XIV has made several calls for world peace, emphasising that it begins with individual hearts, requires the establishment of institutions for peace, and involves rejecting violence and embracing nonviolence and unity. He has specifically called for peace and promoted a commitment to walk the path of peace with other religions. His message calls for a disarmed peace and highlights the importance of fraternity and reconciliation in a divided world.

Jesus wants to be found. He wants us to know that he is ready when we make our way to him and say, "Lord, have compassion, have pity on me, make me whole, make me the way God intended me to be." And, of course, we say this often in our Mass – commencing with: Lord have mercy! Then, Jesus will say, "You will find peace. You will find strength. You will find courage. You will find all these things if you journey with me to my Father's house."

So, today's gospel is very simple: we are on a journey to our Father's house. But when and how will we get there?

Life throws many challenges at us. Whoever we are, and no matter how nurturing and protective our parents might have been, and how good you are today as parents, there will always be times when things don't go according to plan. Growing up for our young today is not always easy. Growing old also has its challenges, and our busy middle stages of life can overwhelm us at times.

Then let us remember: The ten men probably had a bright future. Leprosy forced them to live apart and crushed their dreams. They hear about Jesus and hope that he might be able to help. Keeping their distance, they cry out to him from afar, "Master, have mercy on us".



And if we just do that: “Lord have mercy on me”, Jesus will hear and you will find, not only will your life change, but the world around you will change. This Gospel story helps understand the value of Faith and gratitude and to understand that this world was created for us, all of us, and the way we approach each other is: everything is a gift, a gift from God and a gift from others.

In fact, throughout Luke's Gospel, faith is found in surprising places. Mary's faith is shown in Luke's Gospel through her unconditional acceptance of God's word, demonstrated when she declares, "I am the Lord's servant; may your word to me be fulfilled" (Luke 1:38). Her faith is also evident in her willingness to trust and obey God's plan, even without fully understanding it, and her role in praising God for His faithfulness and mercy, as expressed in her song of praise, the Magnificat.

We must realise also that another lesson for us in this Gospel has to do with salvation. All ten of the lepers were given the gift of healing, but in his gratitude to God for this gift, the Samaritan found salvation. Our salvation is found in recognising the gifts we have been given and knowing to whom we must offer our thanks.

But the greatest gift is when we come to the Eucharist, which is a celebration of our thanksgiving, and we say to each other, “You and I are one, and one with God, and that is the heart of the matter.”