

Daily Reading & Meditation

Sunday (October 13): "He fell at Jesus' feet giving thanks"

Scripture: *Luke 17:11-19*

11 On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. 12 And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance 13 and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." 14 When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. 15 Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; 16 and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. 17 Then said Jesus, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19 And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."

Meditation: What can adversity teach us about the blessing of thanksgiving and the healing power of love and mercy? The Book of Proverbs states: *A friend loves at all times; and a brother is born for adversity* (Proverbs 17:17). When adversity strikes you find out who truly is your brother, sister, and friend. The Gospel records an unusual encounter between two peoples who had been divided for centuries. The Jews and Samaritans had no dealings with one another even though Samaria was located in the central part of Judea. Both peoples were openly hostile whenever their paths crossed. In this Gospel narrative we see one rare exception - a Samaritan leper in company with nine Jewish lepers. Sometimes adversity forces people to drop their barriers or to forget their prejudices. When this band of Jewish and Samaritan lepers saw Jesus they made a bold request. They didn't ask for healing, but instead asked for mercy.

Mercy is heartfelt sorrow at another's misfortune

The word *mercy* literally means "*sorrowful at heart*". But mercy is something more than compassion, or heartfelt sorrow at another's misfortune. Compassion empathizes with the sufferer. But mercy goes further - it removes suffering. A merciful person shares in another's misfortune and suffering as if it were his or her own. And such a person will do everything in his or her power to dispel that misery.

Mercy is also connected with justice. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), a great teacher and scripture scholar, said that mercy "*does not destroy justice, but is a certain kind of fulfillment of justice. ...Mercy without justice is the mother of dissolution; (and) justice without mercy is cruelty.*" Pardon without repentance negates justice.

God's mercy brings healing of mind, heart, and body

So what is the significance of these ten lepers asking for mercy? They know they are in need of healing, not just physical, but spiritual healing as well. They approach Jesus with contrition and faith because they believe that he can release the burden of guilt and suffering and make restoration of body and soul possible. Their request for mercy is both a plea for pardon and release from suffering. Jesus gives mercy to all who ask with faith and contrition.

Why did only one leper out of ten return to show gratitude? Gratefulness, another word which expresses gratitude of heart and a thankful disposition, is related to *grace* - which means *the release of loveliness*. Gratitude is the homage of the heart which responds with graciousness in

expressing an act of thanksgiving. The Samaritan approached Jesus reverently and gave praise to God.

Ingratitude leads to lack of love and kindness, and intolerance towards others

If we do not recognize and appreciate the mercy and help shown to us we will be ungrateful and unkind towards others. Ingratitude is forgetfulness or a poor return for kindness received. Ingratitude easily leads to lack of charity and intolerance towards others, as well as to other vices, such as complaining, grumbling, discontentment, pride, and presumption. How often have we been ungrateful to our parents, pastors, teachers, and neighbours? Do you express gratitude to God for his abundant help and mercy towards you and are you gracious, kind, and merciful towards your neighbour in their time of need and support?

Psalm 98:1-4

1 O sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvellous things! His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory.

2 The LORD has made known his victory, he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations.

3 He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

4 Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!

Daily Quote from the early church fathers: *Cleansing of the ten lepers*, by Cyril of Alexandria (376-444 AD)

"Why did [Jesus] not say, 'I will, be cleansed,' as he did in the case of another leper (Luke 5:13), instead of commanding them to show themselves to the priests? It was because the law gave directions to this effect to those who were delivered from leprosy (Leviticus 14:2). It commanded them to show themselves to the priests and to offer a sacrifice for their cleansing. He commanded them to go as being already healed so that they might bear witness to the priests, the rulers of the Jews and always envious of his glory. They testified that wonderfully and beyond their hope, they had been delivered from their misfortune by Christ's willing that they should be healed. He did not heal them first but sent them to the priests, because the priests knew the marks of leprosy and of its healing."

OPENING PRAYER "Lord Jesus, may I never fail to recognize your loving kindness and mercy towards me. Fill my heart with compassion and thanksgiving, and free me from ingratitude and discontentment. Help me to count my blessings with a grateful heart and to give thanks in all circumstances." **Amen.**

CLOSING PRAYER:- World Peace, .

Almighty God, from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed, kindle in the hearts of all men the true love of peace, and guide with Your pure and peaceable wisdom those who make decisions for the nations of the earth; that in tranquillity Your kingdom may go forward, till the earth be filled with the knowledge of Your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**