

Daily Reading & Meditation

He Fell at Jesus' Feet Giving Thanks

SUNDAY 9 OCTOBER 2022

GOSPEL READING: 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?

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: - Lord, ***You invite all who are burdened to come to You.*** Allow your healing hand to heal us. Touch our soul with Your compassion for others. Touch our hearts with Your courage and infinite love for all. Touch our minds with Your wisdom, that our mouths may always proclaim Your praise. Teach us to reach out to You in our need and help us to lead others to You by our example. Most loving Heart of Jesus, bring us health in body and spirit that we may serve You with all our strength. Touch gently this life which You have created, now and forever. We continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka facing anti-government protests and demonstrations. **Amen**