

Luke 17:11-19

Jesus has the power to heal and he looks beyond our appearances
True faith involves thanksgiving, praising God! Without it we miss out!

A mark of true faith

Just think of someone you know who has a strong faith in Jesus! What is it about them that makes you think that? What is it about them that's different? If it is just the way they look, then that doesn't mean anything. If it's the way they speak, anyone can learn to say things in a particular way. Yet if it is an attitude toward life, a vibrancy or a positivity in spite of their situations then that is something significant. And today we are going to hear about someone whose faith is seen in their attitude and it is really challenging for us all, what ever we believe.

A huge miracle

Today's reading from Luke is a miracle unlike the healings we normally read about in the gospels. We've probably heard of Jesus healing people, even those with skin conditions, he healed a Leper back in chapter 5. But this is not just an individual case, it is not even 2 people, this is a morning or a days worth of patients for a GP. 10 people all at the same time with the same condition.

Outcasts

But let's just take a moment to try understand the situation. We meet Jesus travelling around as he so often did in v11 *Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance*

Jesus arrives at a village and can see at a distance a group of men. Now they are used to keeping their distance because they were Lepers, the name given to skin diseases, The common factor of these varying conditions was that they were put in quarantine. They were far from friends, family and neighbours. They had to move out of their homes and became isolated and cut off. They were outcasts and even worse some people viewed them as cursed. Some people even believed that they were beyond God's care, they were cursed and even God had turned his back on them.

A call for help

So how bold it was of them to cry and shout out in v13 *'Jesus, Master, have pity on us!'* These Lepers address Jesus like they know him, just like his disciples do. Not like the vast crowds who followed him for something to eat or something spectacular to see, no they called Jesus a teacher. These Lepers have obviously heard about Jesus and they must believe that he has not forgotten them, That he would come close enough so that they could speak to him. They must have heard of his compassion and his power.

A strange response

So given their cry for help, does Jesus heal them there and then? Well no, instead he says something which sounds a little unhelpful v14, *When he saw them, he said, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.'*

Jesus tells them to go to the priest, now from the days of Israel in Leviticus God had called the priests to be the health

inspectors and medical specialists of their day. They were to observe whether a Leper was healed or not. Jesus hasn't healed them yet but they believe. They set out on the journey before they see the proof and so v14 continues *And as they went, they were cleansed.*

Jesus could have healed them whilst they were with him, yet he sent them away. They would have still known who it was who healed them, but they had to make a choice. Now that they had been healed what were they going to do? They had been waiting, hoping, praying for Jesus to come and heal them and now it has happened.

Thankful heart

Yet one of them chose to do something the others did not. Just look at v15 *One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him.*

It is the kind of thing we teach children, make sure you say thank you when someone gives you something or does something for you. One of the most revealing things about teaching children though is that they learn by example too. So however much you stress the importance of saying thank you if you don't do it then neither will your children. Yet this man unlike the other 9 men, choose to give Jesus thanks and praise for what he had done.

A Samaritan!

The last part of that verse is meant to be a shock! To us though it probably has very little impact. Yet v16 ends with one of those twists in a film that makes everyone gasp! I don't know if you ever watched the film the Sixth Sense, if

you haven't someone may have already spoilt it for you! In that film a truth is revealed at the end that totally undoes everything you have seen. And here we had 10 men healed and one was a Samaritan! Or to put it another way, he was an enemy of the Jews. He was someone most Jews would have gone out of their way to avoid. This man, this foreigner, this outcast for racial reasons was healed by Jesus.

Jesus goes beyond our appearances

The good news here is that the prejudices which we hold and apply to others mean nothing to Jesus. There is no factor that makes Jesus ignore a person or leave them on their own. Jesus came for all, he came to die for the world, that everyone might believe and be saved. He is not like the man Jonah from the OT who ran away instead of sharing the good news with a city full of people because he didn't think they deserved to be saved. No Jesus shows his compassion to the people we overlook, he loves those we despise and he saves those who we might ignore. All of that is great news, because it means that none of us have sinned

or rebelled too much for Jesus to welcome into his family. So if you have let something hold you back from coming to Jesus then just remember it is only you keeping your distance, Jesus came all the way from heaven to meet with you!

Recap

So we have seen Jesus' immense compassion and power, we've seen that he came for everyone not just those who look good or have it sorted. He came for those of us who are messed up, lost and broken. He came for those of us

who society overlook. Jesus loves you and longs for you to know him.

Thankfulness

But the story doesn't stop there v17 *Jesus asked, 'Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?' 19 Then he said to him, 'Rise and go; your faith has made you well.'*

Of all the people you would have expected to recognise and praise Jesus it was the Jewish men. Yet only the Samaritan returned. And in turn only he received this blessing from Jesus, Only the Samaritan was commended for his faith. Only he experienced the joy of praising the one who had healed him.

Are we thankful

So as we go back to thinking about people we know with a strong faith in Jesus, I hope that joy and thankfulness were things that came to mind. Because faith is one thing, the men all had faith that Jesus would heal them, but only one of them lived out their faith. Only one of them had a faith which led them to experience the joy of praising God and giving him thanks. I spoke about the Actor Terry Crews the other day and about how on a TV show he was asked what made him so positive and full of life, his answer was being thankful. It was really striking and so I googled him to find out if it was because of his faith and it was. Terry Crews is a Christian, a Hollywood star who is not afraid to share what he believes. In a tweet he wrote "Happy to be saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Ghost! God is good and has always been! Thanks to Him for EVERYTHING!"

Our vision as a church is to share the love and joy of knowing Christ and this morning we have seen an example of what it takes to experience the joy of knowing Christ and it is thankfulness. True faith is seen in giving thanks for what we have. Now as a family we always try and give thanks for our food at meal times and it was something my parents did with me as a child. I am so glad, because I know that on those days when prayer is hard, when reading the Bible hasn't happened, I will have prayed and thanked God every time I have eaten. Now I have tried to add other times to do it as well, but if you change one thing about your day tomorrow then let it be a time of giving thanks to God!