

Sermon for Sunday 10/10/10 The 10 Lepers

For the story of the 10 lepers can I have 11 volunteers please?
We'll re-enact it Barney's style.

Ten of you huddle over there – you not allowed near the rest, you are seen as unclean because you have a highly contagious disease. No one comes and touches you, makes you feel loved, and you have to stay and live outside the village – which is here (congregation).
See if you can look sick and leprous.

Now you are hanging around the road, the way into the village, Why? Because someone may have pity on you and throw a scrap of food towards you.

And while you are there, and oh by the way did you notice this is a SMB group of only men? While you are there someone you have heard about as being able to heal comes by.

Jesus.

(person acting Jesus' part walks toward the village).

And from the Gospel you call out together?

Jesus, Master, have pity on us.

Jesus SAW them (Jesus looks at them intentionally). Jesus never knocked back anyone who asked Him for healing.

And He simply says:

Go show yourselves to the priests.

Jesus is obeying God's rules here. A priest had to declare a leper clean for them to be returned to the community. It was the final step for someone healed of leprosy. So surely He is putting the cart before the horse. Shouldn't He proclaim healing, lay hands on them, do something rather than ask them to do the final something that had to be done to be declared clean?

They obey, without question. If Jesus says do it – do it!! Even if it doesn't make sense. To do just that is a step of faith.

And as they obey this simple instruction and begin walking in that direction they discover that they are being healed/ cleansed.

Then one, a despised Samaritan, turns back to thank Jesus. (who wants to be the Samaritan today and go running back to Jesus?).

Jesus' words to this leper reveal two things:

- 1 He is impressed by faith – ***Rise your faith has made you well.***
- 2 And He is impressed by thanksgiving. Us giving thanks.

Actors return to seats with thanks.

Let's look at the Gospel story in the light of our reading from 2 Tim 2.

There is much in that reading but two ideas stood out to me.

- 1 *God's word is not chained.* V9 and
- 2 *V 15 do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

1stly God's Word is not chained. Paul was physically in chains and so he knows what he is talking about, and the irony of the juxtaposition. Nothing can tie God's Word down. It is living and active and achieves what God purposes it to achieve. So if you don't know how to pray about a situation, use the Word of God. If you have a promise through a Bible verse – believe it will achieve what it promises – for it cannot be chained.

2ndly do your best to present yourself to God as one approved. We can do that because God's Word tells us that that is our status. Romans 8:1 *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...*

When we have repented of our sins and choose to believe Jesus is the Son of God we are automatically approved by God. We don't have to earn His approval, earn His love. He so loved us first. He loves us so much. It is like a loving parent with a child – the child doesn't have to do anything to earn the parents' love.

So we know God approves of us because God loves us. And because He loves us so much He allowed His Son to take our sins so that we could become God's adopted children. This is how God demonstrated His love for us – through the sacrifice of His Son.

We were all unclean – like lepers – we couldn't be near God because God is so pure and clean and holy and sin is not able to be near Him. The lepers cried out to Jesus – ***Jesus, Master, have pity on us.*** Well even before we knew we were sinners and needed God's pity on us – He gave it to us, we didn't need to initially cry out for mercy because the very nature of God is mercy and He knew we needed His help. It is like we had an internal leprosy, or a fatal incurable contagious cancer, that is beyond our ability to heal and be cleansed of – every one of us. There is no difference

between those who lead a good life and those who do lots of good works and those who don't even try. All need Jesus first. Paul to the Romans put it this way:

There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. Rom 3:22-24

1 John 1: 9 says *if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Our right status with God comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Romans 3:22: *This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.*

So the story of the 10 Lepers reminds us that Jesus is the One who cleanses what no one else could clean. In the lepers case the disease. In our case, and in fact in everyone's case for there is no difference between us in this, Jesus cleanses us from sin. He cleanses us from all sin – and sin separates us from God. He leaves us free to make a choice to repent, ie say we are sorry for what we have done wrong. We are blessed in our Holy Communion Service that we have that opportunity to repent of our sins before receiving Communion. But every day it is important to check with Jesus if we have offended Him and say sorry for it. So that we stay clean.

This is such good news – to know we have been cleansed by Jesus, in fact by His Blood He shed for us, washed clean in His precious Blood. So unlike the lepers it is important to not take it lightly. Nine of them went on their way and didn't return to thank the One who cleansed them. Let's be careful to remember daily to thank Jesus for what He did for us. For He did it the hard way through a flogging and a crucifixion. Out of love for us, even before we knew Him.

Remember from the Gospel Jesus is

- 1) impressed by faith. So let's act like one who is now approved of by God through faith in what Jesus did on the Cross for all of us.

And

- 2) Thank Him. Daily if we can remember - and every Sunday as we gather for Communion and remember exactly what He did. The words we use in our Prayer Book come from the Scriptures and faithfully do what Jesus asked: ***Do this in remembrance.***

Remembering is a great way to offer thanks and helps us do what the rest of the verse in Timothy suggests ie *handle the word of truth correctly*.

- We have such a treasure in our faith in Jesus.
- We have been cleansed better than those suffering leprosy.
- All we have to do is live a life of thanksgiving, a regular remembrance.

And this pleases God and grows our faith – which also pleases God.

As we finish with prayer, let's offer prayers of thanks – think of two things you would like to thank God for and as I pray I will leave a silence for you to offer your personal thanks.

Let us pray:

Homily for the Dedication of Jonas and Zoei - 10 October

We just had the story of the 10 lepers and in a little while we will dedicate two precious little ones to Jesus Christ. Dedicating them to Jesus means setting them apart for Him. It is like saying to Jesus: "I know you have entrusted me with these children and I take seriously the responsibilities of helping them come into full relationship with You".

So to the family of Jonas and Zoei did you know you have a choice? When you leave here you can act like nine of the cleansed lepers and mostly forget what today was about or you can handle what has taken place and the promises you make today as seriously as the one leper, the Samaritan, who returned to give thanks to Jesus.

Parents, spiritual mentors, family and friends of Jonas and Zoei, today you and we publicly give thanks to God for them so I would like to encourage you in ways that help carry on what you are doing today.

The first is obvious and easy:

- You can pray for, and with, them everyday. Now you are most likely doing that, but imagine the blessings if you start your prayers for your children with thanking God for them. It cuts rejection, abandonment issues off before they surface. It is simple but powerful. Thank God for them, regularly.
- 2ndly: work out your game plan to help them grow into all God has for them. Today is a Spiritual beginning – what are your goals in teaching and preparing Jonas and Zoei for Baptism so that they are born again by water and the Spirit? Jesus said in John 3:5 *I tell you the truth no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of the water and the Spirit.*

Left to their own devices they will not find it easy in a world so full of things that are not of God. So it is helpful to work out your plans for the next 16 - 18 years to help them grow in their love and knowledge of God.

The Psalm you chose for this service shows how much God knows us and how much He loves us. V 13 of the Psalm we will read in a little while: *For you created my innermost being: You knit me together in my mother's womb.*

And that wonderful passage from Ephesians 3:14-19 that is part of this dedication service on page 6 and will also be read in a minute. This is something that is on God's heart. God desires that we know how deeply

He loves us. And how broadly He loves us. We are formed and established in God's love. He can't not love us.

We just have to receive His love into us. Help your children do this.

Do you remember I suggested you pray for and with your children each day? These verses are a great way to pray. For they pray for them to be strengthened in their inner person and to be filled with the amazing love of God, and to be filled with the fullness of God.

I finish now by praying it for all of us and especially for Jonas and Zoi.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, I pray that out of Your glorious riches that you will strengthen Zoi and Jonas with power in their inner being through Your Spirit. I pray that Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith and that they being rooted and established in love may recognise how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ for them and that they would know this love that surpasses knowledge so that they may be filled with the fullness of God. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.