

Ripon & Lower Dales

Worship at Home

9th October 2022

I hope you are all feeling well as you read this service, for we are going to visit some people today who are definitely not feeling 100%. We will visit a small leper colony in our scripture, where a group of ten men seek healing and a restoration to life in all its fullness.

Gathering Prayer

The Holy Spirit has the power and the willingness to cleanse our hearts and minds today,
removing from us the things that hinder us.
Thank you, O God, for your Spirit's cleansing presence,
and that we can be renewed, daily,
with assurance of your forgiveness and grace. Amen.

Call to Worship

Shout with joy to God, all the earth!
Sing the glory of his name:
Make his praise glorious!

Hymn StF 44 Come and celebrate

- 1 Come on and celebrate
his gift of love, we will celebrate
the Son of God who loved us
and gave us life.
We'll shout your praise, O King,
you give us joy nothing else can bring,
we'll give to you our offering
in celebration praise.
- 2 Come on and celebrate, celebrate,
celebrate and sing,
celebrate and sing to the King.
Come on and celebrate, celebrate,
celebrate and sing,
celebrate and sing to the King.

Patricia Morgan and Dave Bankhead

Prayers of praise, thanksgiving and confession

Almighty God, we praise you for your extravagant love, which gives hope, joy and courage.

We praise you for your love, which never lets us down and never lets us go.

We praise you for dealing with our fears, touching our lives and healing our brokenness.

We praise you for always being there when we needed you most, for being there when we least expected it and for being there when no else was.

Almighty God, we thank you that we can trust you at all times, in every situation, when life is good and when our life is bad.

We thank you for the assurance that there is no darkness that your love cannot penetrate, and there is no burden that you cannot carry.

We thank you for Christ's coming into our world, that he has walked and faced all that we face too, confronted life's pressures and temptations and shown us how to overcome them.

We thank you for his life lived in faith to you, his obedience to your will, even to dying on a cross as a sign that there is no limit to what you will do to find us when we are lost.

We thank you that through Christ's resurrection we have power for life now and the assurance of our place with you in the life to come.

Almighty God, we confess there are times we find the cost of living by faith a price too hard to bear.

Forgive us for not trusting you enough and not being ready to allow you to touch our lives and change our hearts, to change our minds and heal our wounds.

Cleanse us, renew us and forgive us, that we may be channels of grace, a healing hand to our neighbour and a better servant for you.

We ask these prayers in Christ's name.
Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our father in heaven, Hallowed be your Name,
Your kingdom come, Your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen.

Hymn 36 There's a quiet understanding

1 There's a quiet understanding
when we're gathered in the Spirit,
it's a promise that he gives us,
when we gather in his name.
There's a love we feel in Jesus,
there's a manna that he feeds us,
it's a promise that he gives us,
when we gather in his name.

2 And we know when we're together,
sharing love and understanding,
that our brothers and our sisters
feel the oneness that he brings.
Thank you, thank you, thank you, Jesus,
for the way you love and feed us,
for the many ways you lead us ;
thank you, thank you, Lord ;
thank you, thank you, Lord.

Tedd Smith (b. 1927)

Bible Reading Luke 17:11-19

Jesus Heals Ten Men With Leprosy

¹¹ 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^l met him. They stood at a distance ¹³ and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

¹⁴ When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

¹⁵ 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—and he was a Samaritan.

¹⁷ 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."

Word

"Oh! Ten tiny fingers, ten tiny toes" is something we may croon, as we hold a new born baby. So perfect, yet so small, we can delight in the sight - but when we look at someone with leprosy, there is not going to be the same sense of excitement when we look at their hands and feet.

Living with leprosy is not particularly pleasant these days, although there are treatments and cures, but at the time of Jesus, leprosy meant exclusion from family, friends and home. A leper was forced to live on the edge of society, beyond the city wall. They would band together – there is safety in numbers, after all, but they needed to hide away and keep their distance from people during the day to prevent transmission of the disease. Leprosy does go into remission though, and if a leper felt he was well enough to return to society, he could present himself to a priest who could declare him clean.

The ten men in our reading, presumably lived together, supporting each other, and would have gathered scraps of food wherever they could – perhaps relying on relatives bringing them supplies and fresh food. But it would not be an easy life.

Within this group of ten lepers, there is a Samaritan. For him, life would be doubly hard. He'd be an outcast among the outcasts, different from his Jewish companions, who probably only tolerated him out of compassion, as he's blighted with the same disease. Perhaps he had wealthier relatives providing provisions for them all to benefit from. We don't know.

What we do know, is that as Jesus approaches a village, they spot him walking by – and recognise who he is. "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" they cry out.

Usually their cries to a crowd would bring donations of food or money – or verbal abuse, but today is different, Jesus will turn their living death into a new life of well-being.

Jesus tells them to visit the priests. And they did as he said, set off towards Jerusalem and as they walked the most amazing thing begins to happen. The itching and pain begins to fade and their skin becomes smoother as the sores start to heal.

Why did they set off towards the temple? Jesus makes no attempt to reach out and heal, doesn't even mention they will be healed, and yet they go. They must have had a sense of faith that told them to go, otherwise they would have dismissed Jesus as being mad and just returned to their cave grumbling about Jesus not being a healer after all.

The lepers, somehow, have heard about Jesus and his healing ministry and miracles. Perhaps they are also familiar with the story of Naaman, the army commander to the king of Aram (2 Kings 5). Naaman had leprosy and ends up outside Elisha's door. Naaman is given the message to go wash himself seven times in the River Jordan. He's not happy that Elisha doesn't come out to him, and has to be persuaded by his servants –“if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would not you have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you ‘wash and be cleansed’.

If Naaman could be healed from a distance, why shouldn't these 10 lepers? They are prepared to trust in Jesus, and do as he requested, and no doubt began to leap and dance as they realise they are healing as they walk along. Then one stops and turns around and heads off alone – back to Jesus. Only the Samaritan returns to thank Jesus and praise God for what He has done.

This story is not included in our Bibles as just a lesson in good manners - important though they are. It is more significant. The one who returned has received salvation as well as healing. All the lepers have been 'made well'.

Jesus has saved them from future suffering when he healed them, but only the Samaritan was made truly whole – he knew it was God's hand that had made him well.

The other nine have been cured, but the sight of healed skin may not have automatically brought them back to their families. Mistrust and fear could have held people back from fully accepting they are healed, so they may have found themselves still on the outside of society, struggling to find employment or a place to live.

Do we see that in people in our society today? Think of someone released from prison, or another trying to rebuild their life after being made homeless through their drinking or drug-taking.

And, would the healed lepers be worried about the illness returning and wary of getting too involved with others, rebuilding or starting new relationships, in case it all goes wrong again? Consider those who are still fearful after living in isolation during the pandemic, and how it's impacted on restarting their social lives today.

I wonder where you are in this story?

Do we treat people as outcasts, by our words and actions – or lack of them?

And who are the outcasts to us? Do we need to amend our attitude as much as, or even more than their condition?

Are we people whose first thought is to thank God for what he has given us?

Do we ever ask God for guidance on how to accept back those previously cast out – with a warm welcome and open arms.

We also need to remember that we too are labelled by those we meet.

And, we must never forget, we are also known and healed by Jesus, even if we don't say thank you.

The power of Christ's healing love is beyond our understanding, but we can always praise

him and thank him for what he has done for us.

If you read the Psalms, many have words of complaint, appeal for help – why are things so bad for me? Yet they also add, even so I will continue to worship and praise you.

The lepers must have done that during their suffering, so had the faith when Jesus told them to ‘Go to the priests.’

Have you that faith today?

Hymn 655 We cannot measure how you heal

- 1 We cannot measure how you heal
or answer every sufferer's prayer,
yet we believe your grace responds
where faith and doubt unite to care.
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross,
survive to hold and heal and warn,
to carry all through death to life
and cradle children yet unborn.
- 2 The pain that will not go away,
the guilt that clings from things long past,
the fear of what the future holds,
are present as if meant to last.
But present too is love which tends
the hurt we never hoped to find,
the private agonies inside,
the memories that haunt the mind.
- 3 So some have come who need your help
and some have come to make amends
as hands which shaped and saved the world
are present in the touch of friends.
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here
to mend the body, mind, and soul,
to disentangle peace from pain
and make your broken people whole.

John L. Bell (*b.* 1949) and Graham Maule (*b.* 1958)

Prayers for others

Christ the Healer, we turn to you when we are sorely pressed;

We turn to you and pray for peace, that wars will cease and governments co-exist, offering aid and support instead of shooting and killing.

We turn to you and pray that families will not go hungry, that governments will work together to distribute Your abundant harvest fairly around the world.

We turn to you and pray for a release from illness for all those we know suffering today ... May they feel your healing power of peace.

We turn to you and pray for all those struggling in poverty today; the refugee, those effected by flood or famine, and those facing financial difficulties due to the rise in cost of living. May they feel your healing power of peace.

We turn to you and pray that our minds be focussed on your glory, not on the trials of modern day living. You feed our soul and body with your bread of life, quench our thirst with life-giving Spirit, and empower us to enter into the freedom that will bring glory to God and joy to ourselves. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.

Hymn 639 Through the love of God

- 1 Through the love of God our Saviour
all will be well.
Free and changeless is his favour ;
all, all is well.
Precious is the blood that healed us,
perfect is the grace that sealed us, strong
the hand stretched forth to shield us ;
all must be well.
- 2 Though we pass through tribulation,
all will be well.
Christ has purchased full salvation,
all, all is well.
Happy still in God confiding,
fruitful, if in Christ abiding,
holy, through the Spirit's guiding ;
all must be well.
- 3 We expect a bright tomorrow ;
all will be well.
Faith can sing through days of sorrow
all, all is well.
On our Father's love relying,
Jesus every need supplying,
then in living or in dying,
all must be well.

Mary Peters (1813–1856)

Blessing

Go in peace, in the power of the Spirit to live and work to God's praise and glory. Amen.

Kathy Lowrie