

## **Trinity 20 (2013)**

### **2 Timothy 2**

<sup>8</sup> Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, <sup>9</sup> for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

<sup>11</sup> Here is a trustworthy saying:

If we died with him,  
we will also live with him;

<sup>12</sup> if we endure,  
we will also reign with him.

If we disown him,  
he will also disown us;

<sup>13</sup> if we are faithless,  
he remains faithful,  
for he cannot disown himself.

<sup>14</sup> Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. <sup>15</sup> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

### **Luke 17**

<sup>11</sup> Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

<sup>12</sup> As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance <sup>13</sup> and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

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

<sup>15</sup> One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. <sup>16</sup> He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

<sup>17</sup> Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" <sup>18</sup> Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" <sup>19</sup> Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

There are two lessons to be learned from this morning's gospel; The first is about praying in faith, the second about giving thanks.

The first thing to notice is that Jesus takes His disciples on a route between home territory and the land of the dreaded Samaritans.

Samaritans of course were scorned by Jews as their defiled, unfaithful cousins who mixed their Jewish culture and blood with that of other races. So by leading His followers by that particular route Jesus demonstrates yet again that there are no borders, no prejudices from God's point of view. Now Luke doesn't mention which side of the border this village is, but I for one wouldn't be the least surprised if it were Samaria.

That aside, from a human viewpoint, Jesus crosses an even greater barrier - He doesn't turn away in revulsion when the lepers run to Him.

Leprosy was a very misunderstood disease in those days. It was believed to be highly contagious, so lepers were labelled "unclean" and ostracised to their own ghettos – no-go areas of town, where many lived the rest of their lives, out of sight and out of mind. On the very rare occasions that the disease left them, they had to go to the priest, who would examine them carefully before declaring them clean again and free to return into the main community. So when Jesus sent them to see the priest, what He was saying was "go, your faith has healed you", even though at that precise moment in time the disease was still very much apparent on their skin.

Now I don't know about you, but if someone told me to go and seek a clean bill of health, whilst I was still covered in sores and scars

I'd think they were having a laugh. But this of course is Jesus speaking to them, and they've already demonstrated great faith by running to Him immediately and asking for healing. So I'd say this really was a case of "go – your faith has healed you". Jesus teaches elsewhere that when we pray, we should pray in faith, believing in our hearts that our prayers have already been answered. And here's a demonstration of that faith,

where the lepers go – and do exactly as Jesus instructs them. So they go to the priest, and by the time they get there the disease has completely left them. Now it's easy to be judgemental, but I honestly think that right there and then, I'd turn around and make a bee-line for Jesus to thank Him and praise God for my healing, but only one of the nine men returned to Him - and I think the most important warning to us here

is how Jesus notices the missing men. I think this also answers the question I raised earlier too, about what side of the border this village was, as Luke notes the significance of the one man who returned - A Samaritan - the one despised by the others (who think of course that they are God's chosen children) is the only one to come and thank God for his healing.

This should come as a warning to us all, it's one thing to call ourselves Christians and to rejoice that we're saved and already booked into heaven,

but we should never take that for granted and always look for opportunities to give thanks and praise to God, not that we have to – our place is already booked and waiting - but that we will, out of sheer gratitude to our loving Father

Amen