



Twenty Eighth Sunday Ordinary Time.

2 Kings 5:14-17 2Timothy 2:8-13 Luke 17: 11-19

This story is set in the land “between” a kind of no-man’s-land. In stories this land is a land of possibilities, a place of choices, a place where anything can happen.

The tale of the ten lepers is one that is very well known. As children it was read as a warning against ingratitude. Children don’t understand gratitude. When we are young we have expectations that we will be loved and cherished and it comes as a shock if and when our expectations are not met.

As we ages we come to recognise the graciousness that comes as part of the blest life.

Naaman’s story and the story of the ten lepers are given to us so that we might reflect on the virtue of gratitude. Gratitude and grace have a common root. One of the flowers of grace is gratitude. Both grace and gratitude are about freedom and wholeness. Gratitude is a free response which we make to others, the environment and through them to God. It is a spontaneous lifting up of the heart when we encounter the mystery that surrounds us.

Sometimes gratitude makes us burst into speech other times it leaves us silent. Sometimes we feel a great pride in who we are and what we have received and other times we feel humbled by the very same gifts.

A carving, a piece of weaving, a verse are all expressions of gratitude. They speak of the connectedness which is the essence of our humanity. The smiles on our faces when the coldness of beer meets a hot throat on a summer’s day or the taste of fresh bread and oysters are a savouring of the fruits of creation that are part of our constant hymn of gratefulness.

Naaman had looked for the extraordinary when he sought a cure for his leprosy. He couldn’t believe that the grace of God could come to him through ordinary river water. When he saw that he was cured he wanted to pay because he couldn’t imagine that such a gift could be given freely. He had never experienced real goodness from a stranger.

The miracle for Naaman was to meet through Elisha, a God who did not count the cost, who gave without seeking anything in return. Naaman wanted to celebrate his new understanding of God so he asked for some earth to take home. He wanted to create a sacred space to remind him of the gift he had received and to remind him to give thanks. This celebration through ritual was a concrete way to express his gratitude.

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to meet God in prayer in the temple when he came upon the leper camp. The desperate souls who were forced to inhabit such places sought some recognition of their humanity from any passer-by.

Jesus met God in suffering humanity and the meeting was a moment of healing. A Samaritan, a member of a despised race, gave thanks for his deliverance.

Jesus asked, "Weren't ten cured?"

One out of ten was grateful. Is this a measure of our gratefulness? Might the reading suggest that there are many areas of our lives where we are negligent? Do we take things for granted, like health, freedom of expression, support services?

This week we can be more alert to the abundance of the grace of God that comes to us from others. And a reminder from the letter to Timothy, God's goodness is not a response to our fidelity but is a constant even if we are unfaithful.

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