

Proper 23

*Sunday between 9 and 15 October inclusive ·
Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Principal Service readings

2 Kings 5.1-3,7-15c	Naaman is cured of his skin disease
Psalms 111	Praise to God, great and compassionate
2 Timothy 2.8-15	God remains faithful to us
Luke 17.11-19	Jesus heals ten lepers – but only one thanks him

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Jesus heals ten lepers

¹¹On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, ¹³they called out, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' ¹⁴When he saw them, he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went, they were made clean. ¹⁵Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. ¹⁶He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷Then Jesus asked, 'Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?' ¹⁸Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?' ¹⁹Then he said to him, 'Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.'

Luke 17.11-19 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

Jesus is called on unusually by name (this only happens three times in the gospels, the others are the blind man at Jericho and the thief on

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Calvary). Also, Luke is the only evangelist to use the term 'Master' for Jesus. Perhaps this story is indicative of the power of Jesus' name. The action takes place on the road between Samaria and Galilee; it is part of the 'road to Jerusalem' section of Luke's gospel.

Leprosy was considered a sign of punishment for sin. They were consequently cut off from society. In order to be restored to the community they had to be healed, ritually cleansed and officially pronounced clean. The healing action of Jesus restores the lepers to their place in the community.

Only the Samaritan returned to give God thanks for the healing received. The nine lepers, representative of Israel did not return to give thanks. There are two miracle here. Ten lepers were cleansed, and one Samaritan came to faith in Jesus. 'Your faith has saved you,' says Jesus (17.19), pointing to a difference between healing and salvation. Healing was the catalyst, but there was a need to praise God to come to salvation.

Jesus healed non-Jews. Luke makes it clear that Jesus' mission is to the whole world, not just to a chosen few. Does this reading hint at a rejection by Jews of the mission of Jesus?

Quotations

1

We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorns have roses.

A tour round my garden / Alphonse Karr. 1851

2

Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer. And let faith be the bridge you build to overcome evil and welcome good.

Celebrations: rituals of peace and prayer / Maya Angelou. 2006

3

If the only prayer you said was thank you, that would be enough.

Meister Eckhart, c.1260–c.1328

2

Related topics

For further study:

Conversion; salvation; sacrament of healing; faith; grace

Closing Prayer

O God,
our life, our health, our salvation,
look with mercy on your people.

Stir up in us a saving faith, that believing, we may be healed,
and being healed, we may worthily give you thanks.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers · Ordinary Time 28, Year C²

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2 *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.*