

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Trinity XIV
September 1, 2024

Arise, go thy way
Thy faith hath made thee whole.

Some might see today's Gospel as a message about good manners.
"Please and Thank you."
But they would be missing the import of this account.

The other 3 Gospels do not mention this event.
Only St Luke, saw it's significance.
A hint that we should pay attention and dig deeper.
There must be something more here than good manners.

Jesus is nearing the end of His Earthly Ministry
He is walking back to Jerusalem
And His Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension.
They don't know it,
But these last days are precious;
Their training and education is coming to an end
And they don't yet know all that they will need.

Jesus encounters 10 men suffering from leprosy as they pull into an
unmade village.

As with all those infected with the dread disease in those days
They are isolated,
Separated. Shunned.
Barred from the synagogue, the Temple and from village life.
It's as if a wall has sprung up around them; cutting them off.
Separating them from God,
From relatives. From friends.

It was an horrid disease;
 Putrid sores
 That ooze, consume and destroy flesh.
 It was progressive and it was fatal.
 The inflicted were treated as if they were the walking dead.

Jesus saw through the surface of the disease
 Saw into the souls of the 10 men.
 And spoke their healing
 Instructing them to show themselves to the priests.
 An interesting directive.

The priests were the people charged with the duty
 To rule on the status of the men
 Were they diseased and thus a threat to the village
 Or were they entirely cured
 and could be restored to life.

It was the priests who would confirm Jesus' healing.
 And the priests whom the villagers would rely upon
 To accept the men back into their society.

We begin to see a parallel with our lives
 And why Luke,
 Was moved to make sure we learned of this event.

Luke, the physician, knew all about this fatal disease
 Knew that he had no means by which to cure,
 or even relieve it.
 He knew of the miracle
 That only Jesus could accomplish.

But did Luke read move into these events than a miracle?
 Is that why he was so intent upon us learning about them?

What if we thought of leprosy not as a disease of the body
 But a disease of the soul?

One that left putrid open sores
 One that consumed our souls
 One that if left unabated
 Would end in the death of our immortal souls.

Sin is like that.

It leaves a hole,
 It festers and spreads.
 The greater the sin, the greater its impact.
 One small sin begets another and another
 Ever larger
 Ever more dangerous.

Our sins build a wall between us and God.

Sin by sin
 Becomes stone by stone
 Until ,like the lepers,
 We too are cut off.
 Isolated, separated from God
 By the wall of our own making.

That wall can separate us from each other
 As shame and the embarrassment of our actions and inactions
 Pull us away from relatives and friends.

Like the lepers,
 We live a desolate life
 And turn to fellow sinners for comfort and companionship.
 However, the answer lies elsewhere.

Jesus gave us the solution:

The only solution:
 “Go.
 Show yourselves unto the priests”.

At the first signs of the disease of the soul
 Go to the Church
 Seek the Lord’s absolution.
 Heal the sores, stop the infection.

Make good use of the general confession of the Communion Service

Come to church prepared.
 Know the sins for which you seek absolution
 So that when the absolution is pronounced
 It will be meaningful in your life.
 Feel the forgiveness
 The salve of your soul.
 Receive His body and blood here in the sanctuary,
 And nourish your soul.
 Receive the sacrament in your hand
 Or for those of you in the Church of the Air,
 Receive Him spiritually in your heart.

As the 10 lepers were cured of their dangerous physical disease
 You faith will cure the dangerous spiritual disease,
 As you walk your way to the Church.

Now you can see why St Luke brought us this story.

But, there are other lessons to be learned from it as well.

Just as last week's Gospel of the Good Samaritan
 Taught against the Jewish
 prejudice and hatred of the Samaritan,
 This week's Gospel also notes that it was the Samaritan
 Who returned, fell at Jesus' feet and gave thanks.

The healing grace of Jesus, the Christ, is offered to all
 Of faith and belief.
 There are no conditions of race, wealth, nationality, gender
 Or any other criteria or limitation.
 It is the status of our hearts and faith only.

Jesus asks “Were there not 10 cleansed? but where are the 9?”
 Were they so overwhelmed by a new chance at life
 That they thought not of how it happened
 Did they not recognize the miracle?
 The part played in it by Jesus?
 Were they so self-centered that they didn’t care?
 Is Jesus’ message to the Apostles and to us
 That, despite His efforts
 And despite our own,
 That not everyone will recognized
 the hand of God in their lives?
 That we should celebrate the one success and not dwell upon the 9
 failures?

The 9 remind me of the hiker who,
 Lost for 4 days in the mountains
 Had run out of food and water.
 He gathered branches and made a make shift shelter
 He was in bear country but had no defenses.
 He was hungry, thirsty and shivering from the cold.
 He was losing all hope.
 In exasperation, he fell to his knees and begged God for rescue.
 Meanwhile rangers and sheriffs had launched air and ground
 Search for him.
 Near the end of the 4 day,
 He was located and brought to safety.
 A news reporter looking for a story
 Asked if his prayer had been answered.
 The man answered:
 Oh no.
 Not long after I got up from my knees a ranger found me
 And airlifted me here.

We must be vigilant and when the Grace of God
Has blessed our lives
Fall at His feet
Glorifying God and give Him thanks.

We must follow our faith,
Be one with God
And never be one of the 9.